Labour Monthly

EDITED BY R. PALME DUTT

THE FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY

FEBRUARY 1941 SIXPENCE

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This is an excellent beginning. Please keep it up, increase it, and REMEMBER: your money is being put to the best possible use! But there are still several guarantors who have missed two months. Will they please examine their consciences very thoroughly.

CIRCULATION

AT the date of going to press, our January sales are in excess of 21,000. Gratifying though it is to announce this further advance, we are far from feeling any complacency on the subject of our sales. *A vast public remains to be reached.* This is a plain inference from political events, as shown for example by the shattering success of the People's Convention in London on January 12th. But an absolute proof exists in the success of our scheme for sending specimen copies to likely readers through the wonderful collaboration we have had from hundreds of readers who sent in lists of names to us throughout January in response to our appeal. Sufficient evidence has come in to show us that the majority of these possible readers will henceforth be regular readers. Somehow LABOUR MONTHLY had not been seen by them before. The reading of a single copy infused them with an enthusiastic recognition of the indispensability of LABOUR MONTHLY. "If only I had been regularly reading your monthly months ago" is the constant refrain of their letters.

Will *every* reader now please send in a list of likely readers known to him? *The channels of advertisement open to us have been gravely diminished.* More than ever, therefore, we need the help of our readers. If every reader would set himself the really inconsiderable task of making one new reader of LABOUR MONTHLY in February, our circulation would approach 50,000. And then doing it again the following month—with the new readers then playing their part, too—figures of circulation through this "snowball" effort would at last become commensurate with the need for political enlightenment felt by big sections of the working masses.

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LABOUR MONTHLY

A Magazine of International Labour

VOLUME 23 FEBRUARY 1941 NUMBER 2

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The Editor of LABOUR MONTHLY will be very glad to receive contributions in the form of finished articles or of suggestions and data for articles. The customary proviso must be made that no responsibility is undertaken for manuscripts sent to him nor can he promise to enter into correspondence regarding contributions not accepted.
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For the Restoration of Rights of the *Daily Worker*

The suppression of the Daily Worker *on January* 21 *(the seventeenth anniversary of Lenin's death) by a "Socialist" Minister heralds the most serious attack on working class and democratic rights in this country.*

On behalf of the 20,000 *readers of the* LABOUR MONTHLY *we protest against this suppression of the only independent daily newspaper in this country; the only non-Government daily newspaper; the only daily paper entirely financed and supported by its readers, and not by the millionaire trusts; the only daily paper not owned and controlled by the handful of wealthy families who rule Britain, and who own and control every other daily organ, including the organ of the Labour Party.*

The suppression of the Daily Worker *is not merely the suppression of one newspaper among others. It is the suppression of any independent or democratic daily press in this country. It means that the people are to be forcibly denied access to any news save what is spoon-fed to them by the Government press.*

For eleven years the Daily Worker *has carried forward fearlessly the fight for the cause of the working class, democracy and socialism. During these eleven years it has won such a place in the respect, affection and devotion of hundreds of thousands as has never been equalled in the records of the working-class movement of this country.*

The great movement of awakening of the working class and democracy, expressed and led during these eleven years by the Daily Worker, *can never be suppressed.*

Let the united protest movement of all the working class and democratic forces sweep the country.

The test is here and now.

The warning of Germany is before us—where German Social Democracy united with reaction to suppress Communism: and the outcome was Fascism.

The warning of France is before us—where the French "Socialists" united with reaction to suppress Humanité: *and within nine months all working class and democratic institutions were destroyed, and the outcome was Fascism.*

Let us act in time here to change the course.

Defend the Daily Worker! *Demand the immediate raising of the ban. Bombard M.P.s. Carry resolutions in every labour, trade union and co-operative organisation, and send them in floods to the Home Secretary, the* Daily Herald *and the Labour Party Executive. Organise demonstrations in every form.*

We call on all LABOUR MONTHLY *readers to exert themselves to the utmost in this fateful hour for the whole existence and future of the working class movement and democracy in this country.*

EDITORIAL BOARD, LABOUR MONTHLY

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Notes of the Month

The People's Campaign—What January 12 Achieved—A Platform of Unity—"Honest-to-God Citizens"—The Appeal to Prejudice—Internationalism—City and Wall Street "Revolutionaries"—Mr. Churchill on "Christian Ethics"—Anglo-American Counter-Revolution—The British Army of Invasion—Against Whom?—Restoring Order (and "Christian Ethics")—Mr. Benes at the Dorchester—"Bread and Freedom"—Once Bit, Twice Shy—Class Issues in Front—The Fight Opens Out.

THE People's Convention stands adjourned. The campaign begins. A great step forward has been achieved—but only the first step. What was the significance of the meeting of January 12? For the first time since the war, sixteen and a half months after the outbreak of war, a common platform has been established of all the working class and democratic forces which recognise the urgent need in war-time to carry on the fight for the interests, needs and aims of the working class and democracy, and stand opposed to the jingo stream and the coalition with Tory reaction. This is an important achievement, a landmark in the war. But it is only a beginning. That a common programme should have been agreed by over 2,000 freely elected delegates from all parts of the country, who have now returned to report that programme to their organisations and carry on the fight for its aims, is a valuable beginning. It opens up the ground. The representative character of the gathering, the demonstration of strength of support already won, has not only heartened supporters, and given them confidence and enthusiasm; it has impressed enemies, compelled general attention, broken the conspiracy of silence in the governmental press, and established the People's Convention as a political factor to be reckoned with. The People's Convention is now established as the rallying ground of the awakening working class and democratic forces, and the only democratic opposition and alternative to the present Coalition Government.

THIS is the achievement of January 12 which opens the way for further advance. The strength of the response to the People's Convention surprised its enemies rather than its friends. It surprised, that is to say, only those who are completely out of touch with the currents of feeling in the people today. In reality it touched only a fraction of the support that can be won. It rallied in the main those who were already politically convinced or reached by the preceding campaign. But the wide attention now won by the assembly of January 12 means that vast masses have begun to hear of the People's Convention for the first time after January 12. Millions of workers and small people, who are oppressed by intolerable burdens, who are seeking desperately a way out, can now learn that there exists a movement, a policy and a leadership which expresses their feelings and aspirations, which they can unite in and build up, and whose path of united advance can solve their problems and enforce their will. The task is now to reach out to these wider masses with the programme of the People's Convention and on this basis to advance to leadership in action.

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THE People's Convention is not a new party. It is a united movement of the common people, with the industrial workers and the working class organisations in the forefront, against the big business reactionary interests which are destroying the people, which have landed them in the present war, which are producing economic chaos and artificial scarcity, and which—in the words of the programme—"are leading the people to catastrophe." The unity of the movement lies in the unity of interests of the masses of the people and in the unity of the programme. The crisis which made necessary and gave rise to this common movement did not begin with the present war. Enemy criticism has mainly concentrated on endeavouring to present the People's Convention as a "peace movement", a movement for "peace at any price", for "surrender to Hitler". The People's Convention is a movement for peace in the sense that it fights for a "People's Peace", a just democratic peace, a peace with freedom of all peoples, which must necessarily be the common aim of every worker and democrat. But this aim of a People's Peace is seen, not in isolation, but as part of the struggle for liberation of the peoples in Europe and the colonial countries against their reactionary rulers, for the vital social and economic needs of the people, for the extension of democracy, leading towards socialism.

FACED with the evident fact that the People's Convention was no assembly of pacifists, but united "more than 2,000 delegates drawn from factories, coalfields, railway yards and offices all over Britain", "honest-to-God British citizens" (to quote the surprised reports of the big capitalistic press) and was visibly concerned with the urgent needs and demands of the people, the industrial workers, the housewives, the professional workers and small traders and farmers, and was putting forward plans for dealing with the economic chaos, for air raid protection, for getting food and coal, for more democracy, the enemy critics fell back on the theory that sinister revolutionaries were "exploiting" the "grievances" of the people.

Legitimate popular grievances that all decent people sympathise with were vigorously aired. But that was only the surface dressing of this assembly. . . .
They (the people) have too many grievances the Government leaves unanswered. They expected the Labour Ministers in the Government to be their champions. They are disappointed in them. Labour Ministers behave like pale imitations of Tory Ministers.
So the people feel themselves leaderless. They are beginning to turn to the Communist Party.

(*Daily Mirror*, January 13.)

As clever a bit of political exploitation as I have yet encountered. . . . The foreground was filled to overflowing with every grievance and grouse under the sun. . . . Every one with any complaint to make about the effects of the war was there, and in full cry. . . . Each section was happy about the inclusion in the general growl of its own particular complaint. . . . .
They will claim that they did succeed in getting a big crowd. They will also claim that they aroused enthusiasm and assent. They will be right to do so. They have exploited a situation which puts even the Labour Party at a disadvantage.

(*Daily Herald*, January 13.)

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The Communists are exploiting every grievance, large and small, which they think will help to work up feeling against the British Government.

(*Daily Herald*, January 14.)

When the organ of the Labour Party, in place of attacking capitalism for the hardships of the workers, accuses "agitators" of "exploiting" the "grievances" of the people for the purpose of weakening a ruling Tory group, what need to mourn the demise of the *Morning Post?*

THE appeal to prejudice, the attempt to present the People's Convention as serving the interests of Hitler, is only the stale mechanical repetition of the tactics of reaction against the militant working class in the last war—the same tactics which in the last war published a forged telegram of fictitious congratulations of the Kaiser to the Clydeside strikers, solemnly denounced and brought a legal indictment against Lenin as an agent of the German General Staff, or denounced Liebknecht as an agent of the Entente. New only is the zest with which the ex-Left Labour jingoes have taken up this despicable game. The movement represented by the People's Convention is an international movement of all the peoples in all the warring countries, against all the ruling imperialist war-making cliques, for the victory of the working people; but necessarily carried out by each national section within its own country.

NOR is it true, as is sometimes argued, that this international character of the movement is negated by the difference of conditions in Britain and Germany, since the working class and democratic movement is still legal in Britain, despite limitations and threats, while in Germany it has to operate under conditions of illegality. Were such an argument valid, then the Russian working class could have played no rôle in 1914–17, whereas, in fact, they led the international movement. In point of fact, the recent victories and enforcement of concessions by the German workers, in respect of wages and overtime, like the recent mass demonstrations of the Paris workers on the anniversary of the death of Vaillant-Couturier, indicate that the danger rather is that our movement may not develop rapidly enough for the pace of advance on the Continent, so that the Anglo-American millionaires can still dream of using the British people for the rôle of the gendarme of counter-revolution against the advance of the socialist revolution in Europe. Their attitude to the Soviet Union or to the liberation of the Baltic peoples and Bessarabia, their support of Sikorski, Benes and De Gaulle, their intrigues with the Strassers, Rauschnings and Thyssens, are sufficient indications of this, and of the plans they have in mind.

THE apologists of imperialism, who dare to attack the People's Convention as serving the interests of Hitler, pursue the familiar tactics of all apologists of imperialism. They concentrate on one aspect of imperialist relations, the aspect which it suits the interests of their masters to present, and ignore the rest, this resulting in a total false picture. They dilate on the menace of a Hitler military victory to the interests of the international working class. But they completely ignore what the world domination of Anglo-American reaction, whose victory their policy is promoting, means for the

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workers of the world. Rather than face the plain facts, they endeavour to paint a fantastic rose-coloured picture of the lords of the City and Wall Street as pioneers of a popular revolution.

THIS monstrous deception will stand out in the light of history as the deadliest deception of the present war. Here are the two largest and most powerful world empires of capitalism, dominating and exploiting half the world; the wealthiest centres of world imperialism; the main representatives of wealth in possession; the main protagonists of the anti-Soviet crusade; the buttresses of reaction and counter-revolution in every Continent. A quarter of a century ago they drew together in unity to break the rising world revolutionary wave; the United States entered the war within a few weeks of the Russian Revolution. To-day they draw together again in face of the rising outlines of the new revolutionary wave in Europe and the colonial countries. And these precious "socialists" and "democrats" applaud this unity as a popular triumph.

THE lords of Anglo-American capital are perfectly conscious of their mission. The sending of Halifax to the key post of British representative at Washington was not a clumsy ineptitude, but a correct expression of the true character of the war. In his speech at the Pilgrims' lunch on January 9, speeding Halifax on his way, Churchill declared:

> It is no exaggeration to say that the future of the whole world and the hopes of a broadening civilisation founded upon Christian ethics depend upon the relations between the British Empire or Commonwealth of Nations and the U.S.A.
> The identity of purpose and persistence of resolve prevailing throughout the English-speaking world will, more than any other single fact, determine the way of life which will be open to the generations and perhaps to the centuries which follow our own.

The key word here is "Christian"—the standard code-word of the Western counter-revolution (remember Ormsby-Gore's definition of the meaning of Locarno as the "solidarity of Christian civilisation"); the code-word of Pétain and Franco; the code-word of every British official declaration; of Lord Lloyd's "The British Case"; of every declaration of Halifax; the code-word for the crusade against Communism and the Soviet Union.

THE present co-operation of Britain and the United States is not only the expression of the present stage of imperialist relations in the basic triangular conflict for world power: an expression of the present most highly advanced stage of the Anglo-American antagonism, in which the United States "supports" Britain, pours out war materials to foment the conflict in Europe, and uses its advantage to strengthen its position and penetrate British Empire possessions. It is also the expression of counter-revolutionary alliance of the common interests of the wealthiest exploiters. As Earl Browder declared in his analysis of the results of the Presidential elections:

> The ruling classes of the United States are riding ruthlessly into the middle of the bloody imperialist war for the re-division of the world; fear of revolutionary upheaval in Europe, and the determination to hold it down by all means, remains the most powerful general motive driving American ruling circles towards entrance into the war as a belligerent.

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POLITICS and strategy are inseparably united. More than one military critic and journalist has raised queries on the present policy of building up and training a vast field army in Britain, thus maintaining millions of the ablest of the population as idle consumers withdrawn from production, at a time when there is a crisis of man-power for the needs of production, both industrial and agricultural. Yet the policy continues with the enlarging call-up, even to the point of withdrawing skilled farm workers from agricultural production in the midst of a crisis of food shortage. The explanation is spread abroad that an army of invasion is being prepared to carry the war to the Continent and win final victory there. But this explanation still leaves doubts in the minds of the critics, who recall that in the last war the vast army then trained and sent to France, together with the French Army, and the Russian and the Italian, was not sufficient to cope with a weaker German military power, until the final arrival of the American army, a crushing numerical and mechanical preponderance, and the advance of revolution within Germany opened the way to victory.

TO-DAY the German military power is stronger than then, and with considerably greater man-power resources to draw on; while the British Army stands alone. On the face of it, the strategy does not appear to make sense. In the words of Commander King-Hall:

> The Axis Powers have approximately 250 divisions of men; the British may have 50 divisions in 1942. The notion that at any time it will be possible for the 50 divisions to invade the Continent of Europe and defeat the 250 seems to me to be dubious.

On the assumption that the army is intended for use against an intact Hitler régime and German field army, the whole strategy appears lunatic and upside down. Nor will the naïve hypothesis that the civilian populations of the occupied countries will welcome with outstretched arms the British Armies of Occupation, and miraculously reverse the military balance, hold water: the examples of Norway and France, and of the French battleships, shows this. But assume that the army is intended for use *after* the collapse of the Hitler régime, and the spread of the maturing socialist revolution in Europe, for the "maintenance of order" in Europe; and the jigsaw becomes a rational pattern.

IN such a situation of general disorder, with spreading civil war, and with the popular forces still poorly armed and only partially organised, a trained and disciplined army of one million in the field could do a great deal to take over from Hitler the task of holding down the peoples of Europe and strangling the socialist revolution—just as the British forces in 1918 took over directly from the waning German imperialist forces in the Baltic States. For in fact the army would of course be presented as an "army of liberation", enthusiastically welcomed by all the "best elements" in the population, to save "true democracy" and "constitutional order" against the "evil forces" of "dictatorship" and "Stalinism" and "Russian imperialist designs" and "anarchy".

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In a recent speech in the Dorchester Hotel, on January 8, Benes (no doubt mindful of recent doleful reports from his organisation in Czechoslovakia that the people will no longer listen to the promises of national restoration of the old régime by Benes and his associates, but demand a socialist revolution and turn to the Communists for leadership) declared:

> This terrible contest would become even more terrible. In its final phases there were bound to be great upheavals, revolts, revolutions, and demoralisations on the Continent of Europe. At that moment a veritable tornado would break loose in Poland, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere. At that moment it would be necessary not only to explode and destroy Hitler's grotesque and primitive "new order", but to create rapidly a new foundation for peaceful life, and aid a disrupted Europe to reconstitute itself.

The real aim is here plainly enough visible. And again in the same speech:

> What is happening in the greater part of the German Reich to-day is a repetition of the period which began in Germany in 1917.

Here the parallel is explicit and consciously stated. The situation is seen in terms of a repetition of 1917. And the task is seen as a repetition of the task of that period: "not only" to defeat the imperialist enemy, but to restore capitalism, i.e. "create a foundation for peaceful life" and "aid a disrupted Europe to reconstitute itself"—with British and American arms, credits and food supplies.

It is worth recalling that vast food reserves are being built up at this moment by the British Government, which is engaged in blockading Europe, which could be employed, as after the last war, to buttress a reactionary social order after the downfall of German imperialism. This possibility was outlined by Churchill as far back as last August, and a special Government Department under Leith-Ross has since been set in charge of it.

> In one most important respect Mr. Churchill revealed that plans were in hand for future reconstruction. We have undertaken to encourage the building up all over the world of food reserves destined for the relief of Hitler's victims—among whom Mr. Churchill was careful to include the people of Germany and Austria—so soon as Nazi power is overthrown.
>
> (*The Times*, August 30, 1940.)

It was on this scheme, then being worked out, that *The Times* editorial, "Bread and Freedom", commented with complacent self-satisfaction:

> The old slogans are tarnished and faded. Self-determination brought neither bread nor peace in the twenty years after 1914. To-day we need a more concrete appeal.
>
> (*The Times* editorial on "Bread and Freedom", August 13, 1940.)

The complacency and supposed superiority to the policy at the end of the last war is not justified. This *was* the policy at the end of the last war. No less than £137 million (or more than the £100 million spent on direct counter-revolutionary war in Russia) was spent on relief credits, mostly for food, to Europe. The Director of Relief, Sir William Goode, in his final report justifying the expenditure against critics, explained that the expenditure was a necessary insurance against revolution; that "half Europe" was "on the brink of Bolshevism" and that this expenditure of £137 million on food sup-

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plies to the starving populations had successfully staved it off. The strategy is thus not new. What is significant is that their thoughts are thus revealed to be again running in the same channels.

THE parallel to this is Churchill's declaration that "national unity" in Britain is to be continued for three years after the war. With this all the Labour Party and "Left" Labour propagandists' rosy-hued card-castles of "Socialism", to arise marvellously out of the war and out of support of imperialism, come tumbling to the ground. Churchill was blunt and specific on this point. Defining the tasks of the Minister of Reconstruction, in his speech in the House of Commons on January 22, he declared:

> It was not his duty to set up a new order. The scope of the Minister's task was practical, and it had regard to national unity on the one hand and about three years as a time-table on the other.

Interpreting this, the *Times* Political Correspondent explained:

> This passage in the speech was the first public reference to a matter which is known to have been much in the minds of Ministers recently. It is felt that the maintenance of political unity for a period after the war would be of inestimable benefit to the nation in what must be a difficult time, and that any immediate reversion to party warfare would make post-war reconstruction much more difficult of accomplishment. (*Times*, January 23, 1941.)

"Of inestimable benefit to the nation?" For what? The answer is obvious.

THIS does not mean that the strategy will work out in practice as in 1917–21. The conditions are vastly different. The crisis of British imperialism is far greater. Two decades of shattering experience of the decline and decay of British capitalism have sharpened the political consciousness of the people, and this sharpened political consciousness is reflected in the outlook of the workers. The British working class, which in the end, after two years, scotched the interventionist policies in Russia, will not this time so easily let itself be used as the base for counter-revolution in Europe. But to defeat this ignominious rôle (and in place of speculating whether the peoples of Europe will let us down, if we act first, it is more seemly to remember that we have a debt to pay in this respect to the peoples of Europe), it is necessary to defeat the influence of the supporters and mouthpieces of imperialism in the ranks of the working class. The British people have no wish to be the gendarme of Europe. Their feelings and their aspirations are directed towards unity with the European peoples in the common struggle for liberation, and towards unity with the people of the Socialist Soviet Union. And if this time, as we may hope, this outcome is finally realised, opening up a happier life equally for the people of this country and all the peoples of Europe, it will be thanks to the campaign and the struggle of those who are represented to-day by the People's Convention.

WE are approaching to-day great and decisive class issues and trials of strength. This follows inevitably from the present stage of the war, from the growing strength of the people's movement and the growing crisis of the ruling class. The war brings daily greater sufferings and hardships to all

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peoples. The food shortage grows daily more acute. The military perspective of the further development of the war opens up limitless possibilities of extended destruction, as the vast and powerful armaments built up and accumulated on both sides during the winter comes into play. Economically, there is chaos, as the monopoly controls extend their internecine warfare and their plundering of the people. The war becomes more and more a race in suicide and starvation. Incapable of solving the economic chaos, whose causes lie rooted in their own monopolist system, and conscious of losing the confidence of the people, the rulers and their mouthpieces clamour with increasing fury for new and more drastic measures against the people, for compulsion, for industrial conscription, for the State regulation of wages, for the destruction of trade union and democratic rights. In particular, the cry is raised against all the fighting representatives of the people, against the Communists and militant workers, against the shop stewards and active trade unionists and supporters of the People's Convention.

THE fight is coming into the open. The choice which faced the French people at the beginning of the war is facing the British people today. These issues cannot be side-stepped. Not by merit, but by historical fortune, we have had a little longer to prepare. The testing now draws close. The People's Convention has established a common platform for the people only on the very eve of severe trials. Let the working class and democratic forces stand united. Against the unity and solidarity of the working people the reactionaries are powerless. Therefore we must work by every means to build up this unity and solidarity on the broadest front—the great objective towards which the People's Convention has shown the way. We can go forward with the greater confidence, because every day's events is proving more completely that our policy is the only policy for the people, the only policy which is true to the cause of the working class and socialism. Whatever the blows of reaction, the fight goes forward with renewed and redoubled strength; by the lessons of experience, no less than by propaganda, the eyes of wider numbers will be opened; millions will awaken to join the common struggle, the struggle of the working people for life, for existence, to become masters of their own country and their own lives, and to live in brotherhood with the peoples of other countries. We have nothing to lose but the nightmare of war and misery of the dying social order. We have the world to win.

R.P.D.

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The People's Convention — What Next?

BY HARRY POLLITT

THE PEOPLE'S CONVENTION held in London on January 12th, was the most heartening and encouraging political event that has happened in Britain since the outbreak of war.

It will long be remembered by all who attended as the beginning of a new stage in the real fight for freedom and the solution of the problems of war.

As one moved along the 2,000 delegates who met in three halls, it was impossible not to feel the atmosphere of sincerity and confidence, and to draw inspiration from the determination of every person present to defend the conditions of the people against the attacks of the rich, and to find a way out of the filth and misery that inevitably accompanies war.

The majority of the men and women came direct from industrial areas but practically every profession and cultural organisation in the country was represented.

The ideas expressed by Harry Adams, D. N. Pritt and W. J. R. Squance seemed exactly to interpret the thoughts that the delegates had long been turning over in their minds, which explains the unanimity of the Convention decisions. The assembly revealed itself as a growing army, eager to formulate a common policy which, on the basis of a common leadership and strategy, could become a guide to all future work.

What was the significance of the People's Convention? Why did the Press lords and Transport House attack it so violently and make such efforts to turn mass feeling against it and intimidate those who elected the delegates? What caused the demand in Parliament to suppress the Convention?

What prompted the many sacrifices that, even after the travelling expenses of the delegates had been met, the collection could reach £515?

I believe that the answer lies in the growing understanding that this People's Convention offered the only constructive solution of the problems of the war that has yet appeared. It afforded the first great opportunity to formulate a positive and constructive policy to safegard the everyday interests of the working people and to reach a People's Peace and an end to the enslavement of the masses at home and abroad—a first step towards the realisation of everything men and women have a right to expect from life.

The people represented at this Convention revealed its many-sided character. They are from the ranks of those who see only harm coming out of this war; those who are thinking politically for the first time in their lives; those who are disgusted with the political truce and desire to see the independence of Labour from Capitalism restored; those who, while hating Fascism, now fully understand that this is not an anti-fascist war; those

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who have been shocked out of complacency by the Government's treatment of A.R.P. and its astonishing indifference to the danger of epidemics; those who realise the significance of the Government's refusal to state concretely what it is fighting for; those who are profoundly disturbed at the frustration of every constructive activity associated with true science, art, education and culture.

The indestructible core of the Convention was composed of the class-conscious workers who have remained loyal to the fundamental principles of the working class struggle against capitalism in peace or war, and to the principles of Socialism and Peace.

The People's Convention was not out to form a new political party or trade union organisation, but to lead a mass movement that can unite all who are already organised to work for one common policy and programme within their existing organisations so that their full strength can be brought behind the Convention Programme.

It will help to organise those who are as yet not members of any existing body, so that they may use their influence in the circles in which they move.

The Convention was not out to destroy the Labour Movement but to strengthen it, re-vitalise it and make it fulfil the aims of its pioneers.

What is undermining the strength of the Labour Movement? Is it not the policy of the Labour leaders who agreed with the Tory and Liberal leaders to put the Labour Party in cold storage for the duration, and who finally entered the Tory Government to take away the right to strike?

What will strengthen the Labour Movement? Is it not the policy of the Convention that unites every phase of the daily struggle for the real fight against the enemies of the working people, for a People's Government that will act in the interests of the people? Is not this the only way to restore to the Labour Movement its independence and its power?

THE OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE PEOPLE

The Convention met at the most critical stage yet reached in the war.

A stage where both the ruling class and the working class have to face new problems and situations.

The ruling class of Britain has never been in such a difficult position in all its history. It has to intensify the military war against German trade rivals, it has to make enormous economic and political and strategical concessions to American trade rivals, at the moment when the economic war between British and American Imperialism is at its height.

In order to develop this double policy, the ruling class must organise the greatest offensive on the living conditions, democratic rights and liberties of the people.

This means in fact the imposition of forms of repression which constitute the very basis of that fascism which our rulers try to convince us we are fighting. Thus the people are left with no alternative but to unite in order to resist these British forms of fascist enslavement.

It was this knowledge that lent the unprecedented air of seriousness and alertness to the Convention.

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I believe that the present offensive organised by the Government and employers will take the following character:

There will be a repetition of refusals to grant wage increases on the ground that wages cannot follow prices and the need to "avoid a vicious spiral". There will be drastic shortage of food, and fuel, arising out of the chaotic methods of distribution and transport. Prices will continue to rise, and the next Budget will impose heavier taxes on the workers than have ever been contemplated before.

Attempts will be made to introduce industrial conscription and to restrict still further the rights of free speech, press and organisation. We must take note of the Glasgow speech of Mr. Bevin, the Minister of Labour.

This was no angry outburst prompted by a hostile reception. Mr. Bevin is a responsible Cabinet Minister, and when he speaks he expresses Government policy.

The greatest immediate danger is industrial conscription, which it will be Mr. Bevin's duty to introduce.

Let us be warned in time. Every reactionary force in Britain is agitating for industrial conscription, and it will be the task of Mr. Bevin to carry it through.

The proposals recently discussed at specially selected conferences of the A.E.U. and the National Confederation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Unions regarding the relaxation of cherished trade union rights and customs, transfer of labour, and the suggestions that the trade unions become the policemen for the capitalist State in its attack on the militant trade unionists, represent the first attempt to introduce the basic principles of industrial conscription through the medium of the trade union leaders in the Government.

I believe that the Government has chosen the present time to attack the working class for two principal reasons—first it believes that the working class movement is paralysed as a result of the suspension of its normal functions and secondly because the Labour Party, occupying positions in the Government, is not its own master and is forced to accept a policy contrary to the interests of the workers and to carry out jobs which, if the Tories attempted them on their own, would encounter mass resistance from Labour.

THE PEOPLE'S ANSWER

The masses now organised behind the People's Convention have it in their power to give an answer to this new offensive. *And they are going to give it.*

A common eight point programme has now been adopted.*

The whole spirit of the Convention proved that this will be no mere paper programme but one to be fought for and achieved.

The Convention was not just the end of a sudden burst of agitation and propaganda, but the beginning of a new united effort in workshop, trade union, office and working class localities to mobilise the power of the people for its practical realisation.

It is now the duty of the delegates to set an example in the way they popularise and win support for the Convention Programme.

* See text of programme on p. 93.

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This is going to be no easy task, but it can be done.

The Government and Labour leaders will endeavour to make reprisals against the Convention, but these can be faced and overcome.

There should be no false optimism about the stern character of the struggle that lies ahead, or romanticism that our aims will come automatically as a result of the Convention.

We should recognise the plain fact that the Convention only brought together the advanced guard of the people from the various industries, occupations and professions.

It emphasised their unity of thought and gave a stimulus to their future activity, but so far only touched the fringe of the decisive masses whose interest must be awakened. At the same time the Convention did represent forces that, if they *will*, can soon win these masses. How best can we put this aim into practice?

By the most careful and detailed reporting of the Convention proceedings and explanation of its policy. In doing this we must recapture the atmosphere of unity, solidarity and strength which dominated the whole of the Convention.

We must see that such reports are made in every trade union branch, trades council, local labour party, co-op. guild, tenants' associations, A.R.P. committees, shelter and tube committees, in professional and cultural organisations.

In workmen's clubs and institutes; in personal conversation; in letters to the local newspapers, trade union journals. Further, the Convention pamphlets and leaflets must be distributed on a wider scale than has ever been attempted before.

We must see that countless meetings endorse the policy of the Convention. We must make the Labour Party, trade union and co-operative headquarters, the local councillors, authorities and Members of Parliament, know all about it.

It is not possible in one article to give examples to show the types of campaigns that can be developed in carrying out the fight for the realisation of the Convention Programme, but if one or two examples are given others will readily suggest themselves to our readers.

To see that these issues are taken up in every trade union so that united movements can be developed that will end the present sectionalism and divisions that exist, which do so much to prevent the full power of the trade unionists being exerted in the daily fight against capitalism.

In doing all this, to work unceasingly to strengthen trade union organisation, the open and democratic election of shop stewards, the linking up of all shop committees throughout the various industries, and the taking of every measure to ensure the healthy and live functioning of the trade union branches, district committees and trades councils.

To take up the demand for equal distribution of all available food supplies, the elimination of profiteering and every measure to guarantee that what food there is, the workers have equal claim.

This is not simply a question that concerns the women because they have all the immediate difficulties of buying the food. It vitally concerns all working men and women alike, it is the most urgent of all the issues facing the

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common people of Britain. The tables of the rich have been amply provided since war began, but there are millions of workers' wives who are baffled to know what to put on theirs. The workers and their families have equal claim to whatever food there is in the country. Let them exercise their rights. Organise deputations to the works management about the shortage of food, demonstrate in the big West End shops and stores, and to the local authorities and food councils.

Press for the removal of Woolton, and for national and local Food Councils directed by representatives from the trade unions and co-operatives. Refuse to go short in silence.

Take up the question of the unequal distribution of food and its effects on health. Doctors, teachers, co-op societies, small shopkeepers, all can be won for active participation in the fight for food for the people, abolition of profiteering, monopoly control and the general demand for democratic control and distribution of whatever food there is amongst the common people.

Similar united activity can be carried through in regard to every aspect of A.R.P. demands and co-ordinated activity throughout the country. Let those towns which have not yet felt the full effects of the blitz be warned in time by the fate of people in such towns as London, Coventry, Birmingham, Southampton, Bristol, Sheffield, Cardiff and Manchester, so that they may be spared the avoidable misery which the people of these towns had to endure.

The point in the Convention Programme for the strengthening of friendship with the Soviet Union grows more urgent as the whole international situation intensifies.

We are all proud that the Socialist achievements in the Soviet Union have been carried through by precisely the same type of men and women as those who were present at the People's Convention.

Proud that the Soviet Union has become the mighty power in world affairs we know it to be, and that it acts as a beacon of hope and inspiration to all that is best in mankind.

We can help to improve relations between Britain and the Soviet Union by insisting that Britain fully recognises the new Soviet Governments of Esthonia, Latvia and Lithuania, returning the gold and ships belonging to these Governments. Once this is done, the way could be opened for an agreement of trade, peace and friendship between Britain and the Soviet Union.

The conducting of such campaigns as these can draw in the widest masses of the people for struggle to secure their demands. But it will also stimulate the political understanding of the policy of the Government as a whole, expose what a menace and danger it is, expose its rich man's class character, the inefficiency, waste, corruption, profit and chaos it is responsible for.

In this way the demand for a new Government will take on an irresistible character, the mass movement demanding and organising to secure a new type of Government—a People's Government—will grow stronger and stronger, and lead to forms of political crisis, where the masses will find the means of securing this People's Government.

Only such a government as this in present conditions can defend the people against its enemies at home and abroad, and work to secure a People's

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Peace that can not only end the war, but help to get rid of the causes of war.

The Convention Programme as a whole therefore represents all those immediate things which millions of people are desirous of seeing accomplished. And while we cannot make a magic wand of the People's Convention, we can organise these millions to support and fight for its policy if we set our hands to the job. It can inspire united action. It can win increasing numbers to demonstrate their willingness to take their full part in the daily struggle against capitalism and war. This is why everything depends, not only on making the Convention policy known, but on operating it in the daily round of activity and struggle.

Helping to finance its work by collections and donations from all sympathetic organisations, personal donations. The selling of the Convention literature on the widest scale, the distribution of its leaflets, and in every possible way proving in deeds, that the people are readily prepared to find the finance that will enable the whole of this mighty campaign to be organised.

Everything depends on uniting, vitalising and strengthening the only mass movement in Britain that has a real policy, and hope for the people.

When the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, was burned down, it looked almost impossible for the Convention to take place. But the National Convention Committee knew that it would be a serious political defeat if it had to be postponed.

They determined it should go on.

The way that difficulties were overcome was one more example of how resolute and serious-minded working people conquer all obstacles. This is why we are supremely confident that the men and women who came to the Convention will be successful in the next immediate steps. We forged a weapon out of the collective thought, experience and discussion at the People's Convention. Let us now be proud to use it.

It was that veteran Tom Mann who coined the phrase "Forging the Weapon". His pamphlet of that name, published in 1911–12, had a mighty effect in helping to organise those great mass movements of the miners, dockers and seamen and railwaymen.

Today our common movement is a thousand times stronger than it was then. If we all wield the weapon of the People's Convention, nothing can deter us and we will bring a People's Government to power, and the prospect of peace and social advance to the toiling and distracted people of Britain.

We shall have to face bitter misrepresentation, slander, calumny and persecution in the stern and trying times that lie ahead. But the workers need not blench. The recognition of their power is growing, and so also is their determination to use it to the utmost to defend the working class and democratic movement as a whole.

It was good to draw new strength from such a splendid, responsive and representative People's Convention.

It gave a new hope and a new spirit of unity, that has already reached out to great masses of the people.

We can feel sure that every delegate will now go to work, calm and confident to prove worthy of the trust of those who elected them. By their

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personal example they will demonstrate the indestructible strength of the combined forces of British men and women steadfast in the fight for a People's Government and a People's Peace—men and women who have no quarrel with the workers of other lands but feel bound to them by social ties of true internationalism. That internationalism that was expressed in the response to the speech of Krishna Menon, on behalf of the Indian peoples, to Buckle in his speech for the African people, in the fraternal greetings from Paul Robeson and scores of trade union organisations from America.

We may be sure that the German, French, Italian and all other people were with us also in our deliberations and we know that their illegal Communist Parties will find ways and means of making the Convention known.

The People's Convention stands adjourned. When next it meets we are confident it will be able to record great achievements in the advance of its policy and to launch still greater victories.

Long live the People's Convention!

We ask every reader to read carefully our remarks about CIRCULATION on page 96 and our special subscription offer on page 3 of cover.

A wide and immediate response to the appeal of BOTH is *vital.*

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The A.E.U. and the Shop Stewards Movement

BY WAL HANNINGTON

THE CLAIM of the Amalgamated Engineering Union for 3*d.* an hour increase in the basic rate of engineers, having been flatly rejected by the Engineering Employers' Federation, was referred to the Government Arbitration Tribunal by decision of the A.E.U. National Committee meeting. A strong minority in the National Committee were against this course and were in favour of fixing a date for strike action unless the employers conceded the claim. Few men in the shops can be found to express any optimistic expectations concerning the findings of this tribunal. Even those who believe that a favourable result may ensue do not go beyond expecting a very partial concession of the claim.

When the Union representatives met the Employers' Federation to state their case striking evidence was submitted to show that the employers were financially quite able to meet the claim. Numerous examples of extraordinarily high profits and dividends were quoted. Sir Alexander Ramsay, the employers' spokesman, did not attempt to deny the correctness of this evidence. The central point of his rejection of the engineers' claim was that it was "not in the best interest of the country" to concede an increase in wages. The burdens of increasing cost of living—purchase tax—increased travelling expenses—evacuation expenses (cost of keeping two homes)—income tax deductions, etc., suffered by the workers, made no impression whatever upon the employers.

This attitude of the Engineering Employers' Federation is the attitude of the ruling class in general towards the conditions of the workers. The Federation were not prepared to concede a wage increase to the engineers because they did not want to stimulate a wage movement amongst the workers generally.

What are the facts concerning the wages and conditions of the engineering workers? The basic trade union rate in the London area (which is the highest rated district) is 1*s.* 1*d.* per hour plus 27*s.* war bonus, which, on a 47-hour week, amounts to £3. 17*s.* 11*d.* less 1*s.* 10*d.* per week for health and unemployment insurance contributions. This 27*s.* war bonus includes 5*s.* which was granted to the engineers last February arising from a claim made by the Union for a 10*s.* a week increase long before the war started.

Can it be denied that such a wage for skilled workers is scandalously low? A large proportion of these men spent five and seven years serving an apprenticeship, during which time they received extremely small remuneration. Having reached the stage of skilled men, involving an extensive knowledge, both technical and practical, they are entitled to claim the wage stated above. The very existence of the 27*s.* war bonus is a form of studied insult by the engineering employers, who, ever since the termination of the last war,

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have refused to merge the war bonuses into the basic rate, and in the present war are carrying on the same policy.

With a dearth in certain classes of skilled labour some employers have been compelled to offer rates of wages a little above that laid down as the district rate by the Federation in order to secure new employees or to hold those which they already had. In the early months of the war, men were acting shop by shop to raise the rates in their respective factories. The new decree, however, introduced by Ernest Bevin, as Minister of Labour, whereby an employee can be prevented from leaving his employment if engaged on essential war work, has had the effect, as it was no doubt intended to, of stopping the competition for skilled men and preventing the men from using their bargaining power to secure higher wages. Today employers are able to reject the applications of their employees for more wages and at the same time refuse to release them from their employment if they desire to seek a more remunerative job elsewhere. It is not difficult to realise, therefore, how the Bevin decree has put the brake on the shop rate wages movement.

We frequently read in the capitalist press stories about the high wages of engineering workers. That kind of propaganda was served up also in the last war. Where larger earnings are being received than those stated above it is generally due to excessive overtime which the men are being compelled to work. Our forefathers in the trade union movement over a number of generations have fought hard for the principle of a shorter working day. Step by step they were successful, but today all their achievements are swept on one side.

A twelve-hour day in the engineering factories is now more the rule than the exception, and I have met men in the shops since I returned to the trade who once, and sometimes twice a week, work continuously through 24 hours. Even the week-end rest of a day and half, which the workers had enjoyed, has gone. Saturday is now a full working day and likewise Sunday. Men on night work are doing six night shifts of twelve hours a night in each week and sometimes seven shifts. By such excessive hours of labour men are able to increase their earnings, but that does not justify the suggestion that engineers' wages are high.

We must also remember that payment by results has become a general practice throughout the trade, and men are having to work constantly under speed-up conditions in an effort to make up their money. I know cases where men are prepared to work through the imminent danger signal given by the roof spotters rather than take shelter, because by doing so they can earn their production bonus, instead of only securing the time rate they are entitled to when in the Shelter, although production ceases.

With such conditions prevailing in the trade it is not surprising that engineering workers were very strongly represented by delegates at the great People's Convention. The first point in the Convention programme—the defence of the workers' wages and conditions—is a vital issue to the engineering workers.

In totally rejecting the engineers' claim, Sir Alexander Ramsay, speaking for the employers, said:

Under present conditions these applications, if granted, would not in our view be in the best interests of the country unless it could be shown that the granting of them was a matter of imperative necessity, that the country could afford to pay, and

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that such payment would not represent an unreasonable balance in equity between engineering workers and other sections of the community, not forgetting our fighting men. . . . There are men in certain sections, where to give a further increase would be to disown common fairness as between men in the industry, as between industries, as between different classes of our fellow citizens, and particularly between those who produce munitions and those who have the more hazardous task of using them. There are hundreds of thousands in the military, naval and air forces today at home who have been drawn from the ranks of industry. They are not now voiceless or impressionless because they are isolated overseas.

These were not careless words uttered without premeditation. They were part of the carefully prepared reply to the Union's claim, and were significant of an attitude of mind which, at the earliest opportunity, will lead to the enforcement not only of industrial conscription but the smashing down still lower of the existing wage rates to the miserable allowances imposed upon the men in the armed forces. That is the meaning of Ramsay's words. There could be no other explanation for his using such terms in respect of an industrial wages issue.

Commenting on this statement in his address to the A.E.U. National Committee, Jack Tanner, the President of the Union, said:

The Engineering Employers' Federation is a powerful and important body . . . but when all that is said in recognition of their standing in the country, yet we have not reached the stage when we accept them as being the arbiters and judges as to what is in the best interests of the country. We accept them as an authority on their side, so far as the engineering industry is concerned, but we have an elected Parliament, and from that Parliament there is a Cabinet appointed.

In relation to that statement one might very well ask whether Jack Tanner has any faith in the present Government defending the interests of the workers against the policy of the employers. Every act of this Government has proved the very opposite. Trade union and Labour leaders who have been given seats in the Government have made it easier for the ruling class to carry through its attacks upon the workers' conditions by using these leaders to do their work and at the same time silence the rank and file in the Labour movement. There is not one example which shows that any of these leaders have pursued any other course since taking office with the Government.

The engineers are rapidly awakening to the fact that only a People's Government will challenge the vested interests of the capitalist class and champion the rights of the workers. The present class collaboration of labour and trade union officialdom is compelling the workers to make their own organised efforts to defend their conditions. The more the trade union leadership forsakes the class struggle the more does the responsibility for leadership fall upon the shop stewards and factory committees.

The Government and the employers are becoming alarmed at the growing strength of shop stewards' organisation in the engineering industries. They have cause to remember the power of the shop stewards' movement during the last war and today, in an effort to smash the organised power of the workers at the point of production, they have embarked upon a campaign involving the victimisation of militant shop stewards and the replacing of existing factory committees by class collaboration "factory councils". Many active shop stewards have already been sacked in an effort to intimidate and

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break up the organisation in the factories. I was put out from my last place of employment because I was the chairman of the Shop Stewards' Committee and led a successful resistance to the introduction of new employees in the tool room at 2*d.* an hour below the established shop rate.

The engineering workers are fully alive to the dangers of this move by the Ministry of Labour for factory councils, and they will bitterly resist their introduction and defend their right to independent trade union shop stewards. The capitalist press, attacking the existing shop stewards' organisation, has declared that among the objects of the new factory councils (which are to be composed of employees and management representatives, the employees not necessarily being trade unionists) is that of assisting schemes for increasing production and counteracting what the press is pleased to call "subversive elements", meaning, of course, active trade union shop stewards.

There can be no doubt that the employers and the Government are heading for a big fight on the issues of wages, conditions of employment and work-shop organisation. Shop stewards' organisation is very strong in many of the factories, but if the ruling class offensive is to be successfully broken we must lose no time in taking every possible step to make it still stronger. Every existing shop steward committee should immediately review its state of organisation and eliminate all weaknesses. Where there are departments lagging behind in the appointment of stewards they should be brought into line. Where non-unionism exists, the stewards should lead a campaign for getting every worker joined up in the union, and so creating a 100 per cent union shop. The organised shops in every locality should establish contact with each other and through the creation of area shop steward committees, undertake the task of contacting the workers in unorganised firms, advising and assisting them in the work of getting organised in the union and electing shop stewards. Local leaflets and pamphlets should be issued dealing with the problems which exist in the local factories.

Such activity should not detract from trade union branch work: on the contrary, it should help to enliven branch life. We must never lose sight of the importance of strengthening trade union branch work as well as our shop stewards' work in the factories. To neglect this side of our trade union work amounts too often to leaving the power of the trade union machine in the hands of reactionary officials, whereas the job of all militant trade unionists should be that of leading the branches in constant agitation against such officials and for the development of the real spirit of militant trade unionism.

The fight to prevent victimisation of shop stewards must be made official union business. The shop stewards are in the front line of defence of trade union standards, but too often the official leadership of the unions does nothing to protect the shop stewards against victimisation. Such conduct endangers the very foundations of trade unionism. It must be counteracted by increasing our activity in the branches and compelling the union leadership to treat the victimisation of shop stewards as a vital question for trade union action. The People's Convention showed itself alive to the importance of the shop stewards' fight. The engineers will back the Convention in the fight for a People's Government and a People's Peace because, although they occupy a key position today, they have no illusions about the dangers immediately ahead, or about the future treatment which they will receive when this war is over, unless a People's Government is created.

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The Strategy of the War

BY QUAESTOR

THERE ARE signs of a military deadlock. Germany's army controls Europe: but it is so far unable to land in Britain. Britain's navy controls the seas: but it cannot enforce a complete blockade of Germany. German 'planes and submarines are sinking British ships and slowing down British production, but not fast enough to deprive Britain of overseas supplies, particularly of American munitions, or to prevent the absolute expansion of the R.A.F. British 'planes are damaging German industry and oil supplies, but not fast enough to prevent superior German technique from increasing the striking power of the German army and Luftwaffe.

In one respect the balance is not equal—in the score of weaker Allies eliminated. Germany has knocked out France, but Britain and Greece have not yet knocked out Italy, in spite of advances in that direction. It remains to be seen whether the presence of a heavy German air force in Southern Italy, and if necessary of a German army to stiffen the Italian, will prevent Italy from crumpling up under defeat as France did.

Germany seeks to pursue the initiative gained last year in various directions—through Spain towards Gibraltar, but until the situation of Italy becomes clearer, Franco hesitates: through France to gain a new fleet, but again the defeats of Italy make Vichy hesitate: through the Balkans to the Eastern Mediterranean, but the U.S.S.R. sets a limit here: by calling in Japan as an ally, but this has hastened intervention in the war by the U.S.A. On the other hand, Britain is in no position herself to take a military initiative against Germany, and the U.S.A. will probably not be in a position to do so either for at least three years.

Furious and barbarous laying waste of each other's countries, with perhaps desperate attempts at a "knockout" blow by gas: extremely slow mutual exhaustion by air carnage and sea blockade: with the alternative at any moment of extending the war to new corners of Europe and new quarters of the globe, yet without any real prospect of thereby winning a decisive victory —this is the main military perspective before the two chief belligerents in February, 1941.

It is entirely misleading, however, to consider this situation only from the standpoint of the technicalities of military strategy. That would obscure the essential difference between the present war and that of 1914–1918, in which there were also moments when the two imperialist groups seemed immovably-fixed in military deadlock. While every imperialist State is ranged on one side or the other, in greater or less degree as in the last war, the Socialist Soviet Union stands outside the battle, growing stronger daily. This fact has completely altered the situation. It is a constant reminder that world politics determine strategy, and not strategy world politics.

This is not to say that the main strategy of either side will necessarily prove unsuccessful—that Germany has no chance of combining its creeping blockade with invasion to defeat Britain, or that Britain has no chance of

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reducing Germany by its long-term blockade and gradual gearing of America's immense war potential to its own. But, strive each side as it will, it cannot leap over the conditions created by the world political situation; and only fundamental political changes in one imperialist camp or the other can completely alter the strategy of the war.

Millions of people in all countries have since the last war, under the influence of continuous economic crisis and of the Russian Revolution, begun to play a conscious part in politics. The world-wide fight for a popular anti-Fascist front, for a peace bloc of collective security, for support of the Spanish Republic and of the Chinese people against imperialist aggression, was evidence during the last five years before the new war that millions were no longer content to serve as an object of capitalist policy. If the second imperialist war has already an outstanding lesson to teach them after sixteen months—a lesson on a gigantic scale, and one which has already cost them dear—it is the truth of the maxim that "war is a continuation of politics by other means".

This is no mere academic lesson or amusement of the theorist: it is a lesson which is destined itself to play a great part in history. For it is preparing the masses in many countries for the far vaster rôle which falls to them, as they take up afresh the struggle temporarily interrupted or disorganised by the outbreak of war.

Consider from this angle the facts of the strategical situation.

Why does the German army control Europe? Because the British and French capitalist class were so convinced that Hitler must choose to fight the U.S.S.R., rather than them, that they neglected elementary requirements of defence; and in particular because the French bourgeoisie at the crucial moment turned its tanks to face the French workers rather than the external enemy.

Why cannot the British navy blockade Germany as effectively as it did in 1914–1918? Because the U.S.S.R. refuses to serve the ends of British imperialist policy, hostile to Germany precisely because German imperialism refused to follow its anti-Soviet instructions: and consequently huge sections of the German frontier are open to economic intercourse with other countries.

Why is Hitler able to concentrate the full weight of the German air force against these islands and against the British fleet in the Mediterranean? Because the mighty Soviet air force, which was ready in 1938–39 to serve the cause of genuine collective security—and before which Hitler trembled when he spoke to Lord Londonderry in 1935—stands today on guard.

Why has Greece so far been able more than to hold her own against Italy? Partly, of course, because of British technical aid: but still more (since Italian technical strength was still superior) because of the moral devastation wrought in the Italian army by eighteen years of Fascist rule and external plunder: and most of all because the German army, which could have redressed the balance by breaking through Bulgaria into north-eastern Greece, dared not do so in face of the Soviet Union's desire for peace in the Balkans.

Why is Japan unable to answer the pressing appeals and accept the tempting offers, both of British imperialism to fight the U.S.S.R. and of German imperialism to join in the war—though domination of China would be the reward of victory in one case, and the annexation of all Anglo-Saxon, French and Dutch territory in the Far East would attend success in the other? Just

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because the Soviet Union has become a Power too great for Japan to tackle, as the Japanese imperialists have twice learned, very painfully, in recent years: and because the Soviet Union has been able to give moral and material encouragement to the heroic Chinese people's war of independence.

Why—to move from tragedy to farce—is British imperialism unable to give ear to the appeals and the lamentations of the Priestleys, the Laskis, the Gollanczes, and "let loose the forces of European revolution", or even mobilise on its side the overwhelming man-power of India, which the Indian bourgeoisie themselves would gladly place at its disposal? Because it knows that, with the great example of the Soviet Union before them, the oppressed masses of Europe, once they rise, will go on to a Socialist revolution, and the 370 millions of India to an agrarian and democratic revolution.

At this point it is pertinent, maybe, to make an observation on the subject of "taking the initiative", over which oceans of ink have been spilt in the German, French and British press. It follows from what has been said that British and French imperialism lost the initiative, and German imperialism gained it, not during the winter months of 1939–40, when Chamberlain was spreading complacency and Daladier with Jouhaux were smashing the French Labour movement, behind the shelter of the Maginot line: but much earlier. They lost the initiative during the last phase of the period when Britain and France, still on the defensive before Axis aggressions, still pointing the way to Hitler eastwards, nevertheless still had an opportunity to combine with the U.S.S.R. in a peace group of overwhelming strength, in order to prevent any war at all.

Britain and France still had the initiative in March, 1939, after Hitler's occupation of Prague, and threw it away, during the negotiations with the U.S.S.R. between April and August of that year. The Tories and their Labour collaborators in Britain, and the Radical and Socialist traitors in France, did their "Fifth Column" work so well at that time that no general could catch up afterwards with the damage they did.

Does this mean that Germany is now automatically guaranteed the initiative for the rest of the war? By no means: the obstruction of her advance to the Mediterranean through Bulgaria, by the Soviet Union's interest in keeping the Balkans as far as possible out of war, is proof of that. There is no guarantee that German imperialist plans may not be suddenly revised, in face of the prospects of a long war in the west. Therefore the Soviet Union is giving ever more careful attention to its defences, and such measures for this purpose as have been made public—for example, the State plans for training young skilled workers in industry, the lengthening of service in the Soviet air force, the tightening of discipline in the Red army, the organisation of more local output of articles for mass consumption—are only an illustration of what is going on.

At present, however, it is British imperialism which continues to be most actively hostile to the U.S.S.R., thereby ensuring that, so far as in it lies, it will continue to present the maximum freedom of initiative to Germany. For, though the U.S.S.R. will not be dragged into the war on the side of either imperialist bloc, it is ready for friendly and commercial relations with all the belligerents and all those who are prepared to treat with it on a footing of reciprocity. This was particularly emphasized by the leading articles in *Pravda* and *Izvestia* of January 11, commenting on the new Soviet-German

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trade, frontier and compensation agreements for 1941. It can hardly be supposed that the liquidation of the outstanding conflicts between Britain and the U.S.S.R. (particularly regarding the Baltic Soviet Republics), and the conclusion of a trade agreement, would leave German strategy as free in its movements as it is today.

But British imperialism is willing to risk that. The facts speak for themselves:

Baltic questions. Germany, which has suffered heavy political and material loss by the Socialist revolutions in the Baltic States, accepts the inevitable and makes terms. The British Government continues to pile provocation upon provocation.

Danube questions. Germany is publicly snubbed by the Soviet Union for attempting to call a Danube Conference without a Soviet delegation: and accepts the correction. The British Government sends a Note of protest to the U.S.S.R. because the latter dared to alter a state of affairs, arranged by Great Britain 20 years ago, in which the U.S.S.R. was excluded from a voice in control of the Danube!

Balkan questions. The first story about the alleged presence of German troops in Bulgaria appeared in the London *Daily Mail* of December 27, on the authority of mysterious "diplomatic quarters in Berne" (hardly likely to be German, since the story went on to prophesy an early Soviet-German clash). A week later, on January 6, it was a British newspaper, the *News-Chronicle*, whose Bucharest correspondent launched the story that the Soviet Minister there, and the Rumanian Minister in Moscow, had been recalled, as a result of German intrigue—which, said the correspondent, foreshadowed "great events". Even though the Tass Agency on January 13 published a shattering denial of the various stories regarding Soviet acquiescence in the alleged presence of German troops in Bulgaria, it was a British correspondent, *The Times* representative in Sofia, who was told by "well-informed circles" three days later than "a German occupation of Bulgaria is imminent" and that Bulgaria will not be in a position to oppose it (January 16).

The question of China. In spite of its flagrant contradiction by the facts, it is the British press—which continues to publish insinuations concerning the Soviet Union's willingness for a deal with Japan at China's expense. Yet it was *The Times* which on December 11, in a leading article, reproached Japan for not taking advantage of the closing of the Burma Road—a stab in the back for China if ever there was one—to "reach an understanding with China": an "understanding", that is, which would have involved heavy sacrifices by China. It was the *Daily Telegraph* which on December 18 printed a message from its Shanghai correspondent deploring the "shockingly severe price" which the U.S.S.R. was supposed to be asking of Japan for a pact of non-aggression.

Anglo-Soviet trade relations. Not content with sabotaging the Soviet offers of commercial negotiations, one particular department of the British Government specialises in bedevilling relations still further, by periodical propaganda about alleged huge Soviet deliveries to Germany of goods imported from the U.S.A. Suppressing the Soviet declaration last April that the U.S.S.R. imports goods for its own consumption only, the Ministry of

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Economic Warfare issues "statistics" to the press, in which Soviet imports from the U.S.A. alone before the war are compared with Soviet imports since (conveniently ignoring that the latter, in wartime conditions, should be compared with imports from all sources before 1939), and in which the growing requirements of constantly expanding Soviet economy are also ignored.

Direct anti-Soviet propaganda. Mr. Bevin, in a much headlined speech at Glasgow on December 15, publicly accused the U.S.S.R. of stirring up troubles in Great Britain, using British citizens as its "tools". Lord Beaverbrook's paper, the *Sunday Express*, repeated the charge on December 29, with fantastic embroidery about a French Communist sent out of the U.S.S.R. to stir up the French people against Great Britain. These two men, Bevin and Beaverbrook, are both members of the War Cabinet. The constant repetitions of the allegation that the Soviet Government does not wish to improve relations with Great Britain (for example, in a *Times* editorial on January 14) are too numerous even to recount.

While this kind of thing continues, talk of "recapturing the initiative" seems to mean only one thing: continuation of the mutual slaughter of the British and German peoples, with the prospect—should victory for Britain ensue—of war on the U.S.S.R. to follow. For it is not reasonable to suppose that those who are so vehement in hostility to the U.S.S.R., in the midst of a war with Germany, would be more peaceful were that hampering circumstance to disappear. On the contrary, as has been pointed out earlier, the British Government has granted its patronage right and left to the declared enemies of the peoples of Central, Eastern and Western Europe, and the greatest encouragement to those peoples, should they revolt against Hitler and against proposed subjugation by the agents of British imperialism, is the existence and growing strength of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The lesson for the British people from the disasters already suffered, and the terrors still promised, in the present war, is that salvation lies not in the search for the "initiative" lost by the ruling class, but in imposing their will in the shape of a People's Government, free from millionaires and their agents. Then in truth can the initiative be recaptured, in alliance with the Soviet Union, with the European peoples in revolt against Nazi barbarism, with the revolutionary working class of Germany and Italy.

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The Crisis in India

BY MICHAEL CARRITT

WHAT IS HAPPENING in India? The most elaborate smoke screen of confusion is being put up in Fleet Street, With exaggerated contortions the experts on India create their own picture of the "Indian Problem" and then proceed either to apply their own home-made remedies or to declare the problem insoluble. Mr. Amery, rising from his seat at one of his frequent official lunch parties, proclaims the slogan of "India First" and himself as the saviour of India; he claims that he alone can see what is good for India at a time when all her leaders have been found wanting.

Confusion in the minds of the British people as to the real nature of issues in India is understandable in the light of the contradictory nonsense spoken and written about India in bourgeois circles. *Great Britain and the East*, an "authoritative" journal on Empire affairs, declares on one page through the mouthpiece of Miss Cornelia Sorabjee (an energetic propagandist of Sir John Anderson's régime in Bengal), that India remains steadfast in her loyalty to the Empire, save for a few Communists, terrorists and other political criminals. A few pages later Sir Alfred Watson, at one time editor of the *Calcutta Statesman*, discovers that after all India is not united behind the war effort, that the various communities are all at sixes and sevens, and that, whatever the British Government may mean by its offer to form a National Government in India, it would be impossible for the Viceroy to take into his Cabinet "men who were pledged to sabotage" India's war effort —that is representatives of the Indian National Congress. He admits that if India got a real National Government, democratically elected, she would "go out of the war tomorrow."

In similar vein, whilst Mr. Amery is boasting in the House of Commons that India is morally in support of the British war effort, his own Governor in Madras is forced to issue a strong warning to those who are "sneering at war funds and poisoning the minds of the people". And it is reported from the United Provinces that "the volume of anti-war speeches continues unabated". (*Calcutta Statesman*, September 27th).

It suits the imperialists to run this double line of propaganda; on the one hand to create an impression of 380 million freedom-loving people supporting Britain's war against Germany, and on the other an India so disunited, disorderly and generally intractable that at the present time the people are incapable of managing their own affairs even if they were given the chance to do so.

With the prospect of a long and exhausting war ahead, British imperialism is faced with the urgent necessity of mobilizing the vast material and human resources of India for its war effort. This was apparent from the day war broke out; it is a hundred times more clearly so today when the Near East is already ablaze and when the German sea and air blockade is making a dispersal of war industries imperative.

In a world where all could be foreseen (declares the *Calcutta Statesman*), India would be able to relieve Britain of much of her responsibility for the Mediterranean

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front. She is the great reservoir of man-power and raw materials for Asia, Africa and the Southern hemisphere. But India is quite unprepared for the taking over of such responsibilities.

Echoing these imperialist sentiments, Mr. Vernon Bartlett says in the House of Commons:

Whereas Great Britain must be the centre from which we fight the war West of Gibraltar, India would be the centre from which we fight the war East of Suez. We cannot afford a breakdown in India.

Lord Strabolgi, speaking for the Labour Party in the House of Lords, also agrees with the imperialists:

If India's man-power can be mobilised we need have no fear of threats to the Straits Settlements and Burma, and in certain circumstances great help could be sent to Indo-China.

Thus Tories, "Progressives" and Labour Party get together in agreement to mobilise Indian resources for the purpose of protecting the vested interests of Empire in the Mediterranean, Africa and the Far East. And, of course, they are all perfectly clear that this Indian mobilisation for the protection of the Empire is incompatible with Indian independence. The Tories are at least frank about it:

Independence in any real meaning of the word is ruled out by world conditions. (*Great Britain and the East*, Nov. 28, 1940.)

The Labour Party propagandists are a little less frank. They say that it is necessary to "satisfy India", but some idea of what they mean by satisfaction can be gathered from various proposals, such as those outlined in *The New Statesman* of December 14th. It would appear that it is imperialism rather than Indian demands that are to be satisfied, for we find (1) the mediation of the Moderates, Sapru and Jayakar, is welcomed; (2) that a new Constitution is promised *after the war;* and (3) that Dominion Status, not independence, is assumed to be the goal of Indian ambitions.

Further evidence is forthcoming of just how little the Labour leaders differ from the Tory Imperialists and just how little serious they are when they talk about India presenting a "*test*" of their socialist sincerity. In December nine members of Parliament signed an appeal to India—an appeal directed towards winning Indian co-operation in the Empire's war effort. In this appeal two prominent Labour members, as well as Mr. Vernon Bartlett, were associated with six Tories. Sir John Wardlaw-Milne was one of the Tory signatories. He is a Director of the Bombay, Baroda and Central Indian Railway and a Director of the Bank of Bombay. Before the war he was a supporter of the *Anglo-German Review*, the official organ of "The Link".

The message sent by this mixed bag of parliamentarians is a masterpiece of diplomatic obscurity—it declares the "wish" of the British people to see India "free", but it reminds the Indian people that Britain has certain obligations (namely to the Princes and to such vested interests as Sir John Wardlaw-Milne himself represents). Finally, as a *quid pro quo*, it calls for unconditional support for the war effort. "Democracy" and "Freedom", carefully left as undefined wishes, are held up as the glittering rewards to be enjoyed *after the war* in return for co-operation in the fight to preserve the Empire *now*.

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But there is no need to argue the point further. The Labour Party's complicity in the refusal of freedom and democracy to India is clearly exposed in a letter from Transport House to Mr. Krishna Menon, Secretary of the India League and one-time Labour candidate for Dundee, in which it is stated that the Labour leaders are sure that:

you (i.e. Mr. Menon) would not claim that, owing to your natural allegiance to India, you can give full support to Labour Party policy.

The all-Party drive towards the mobilization of India's war potential has encouraged in recent months a spate of "suggestions" from imperialist quarters to the effect that Mr. Amery and the Viceroy would do well to cut out any further waste of time in trying to negotiate with the Congress "irreconcilables" and get down to the business of mobilization by means of all the special powers that rest in the hands of the bureaucracy. In actual fact this advice is hardly necessary; the Viceroy has been no laggard, since the days preceding the outbreak of the war, in taking the steps necessary to mobilize Indian war effort even against the will of the people. The speed with which action was taken is an indication that Imperialism was well aware of the deep gulf separating it from the people.

1. The Viceroy was given special executive powers, overriding the Provincial Legislatures, in the event of an "emergency".
2. A Defence of India Act and Regulations were placed on the Statute Book without even the formality of discussion with the Provincial Governments who would be responsible for administering them.
3. Indian troops were sent abroad against the expressed wishes of the Indian people, and India was declared belligerent without any consultation.
4. On the resignation of the Congress Ministries in protest against these actions, no attempt was made to form alternative Governments from the elected representatives, but the administration was taken over by the bureaucracy.
5. Leading Trade Unionists, Peasant Leaders, Congress Socialists and Radical Moslems were arrested and shut away with or without trial. In an official communiqué the Government declared its intention of interning all Communists it could lay hands upon. Sixty per cent of the arrests were of working class and peasant workers. Students were given savage sentences of 18 months for possession of Communist literature. And now, in recent months, we have the arrest of Nehru and other leading Congressmen including the President, Abdul Kalam Azad.
6. Up to July, 1940, 93 newspapers had been penalized and about £10,000 demanded as security for "good behaviour" without any judicial proceedings. In the words of the Indian Civil Liberties Union: New interpretations, calculated further to abridge the rights of the people, are being given to obscure sections of the Indian Press Act. . . . Printing presses have become terror-stricken and they have often refused to print even notices for convening public meetings, let alone the most innocuous documents.
7. A body of Civic Guards has been formed, over 5,000 strong in Calcutta alone, one of whose main duties according to official instructions is to preserve order in cases of communal or industrial trouble. Its first important activity was to help break the strike of Calcutta municipal scavengers and to protect the blacklegs.
8. Towards the end of 1940 a measure of industrial conscription was introduced by Viceregal Ordinance imposing compulsory national service upon certain categories of skilled technicians.

But these methods of repression, familiar in the Police State, and essential

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for the mobilisation of a people that is opposed to the war, are negative in character. They amount to a progressive repudiation of democracy in India, a repudiation which it might have been thought would have been embarrassing to those who still professed to believe that the war was being fought for democratic ideals. But they are of no avail to overcome difficulties of another type that stand in the way of the British plan to mobilise India.

For India to become the spearhead of Britain's military power in the East, it is necessary to expand the Indian Army to a force between 1 and 1¼ million strong. The equipment of a modern army requires the manufacture of some 40,000 articles, some simple and others of an extremely complex and delicate nature. At present India does not produce more than half of these required items of equipment—and, it may be assumed, the less complicated half. It is out of the question for equipment to be provided from England under existing conditions; on the contrary, the hope has been expressed that India will in time be able to equip other than Indian forces in the Middle East.

But war industries cannot be built up in a day—and all the less so when it happens to be in a country maintained for 180 years in a state of poverty and illiteracy by an imperialism which regards India as a huge raw-material producing appendage of its own industrial system. Heavy industry is in its infancy in India; engineering hardly exists outside a few Government Ordnance factories; less than 1 per cent of the population is employed in industry proper; capital investment is for the most part foreign; machinery for industry has been imported from England up to the outbreak of the war, after which it has fallen off.

The Delhi Conference of the Far Eastern Groups of the Empire was called to overcome these difficulties. The Indian "representatives", unlike those from the Dominions, were a purely official panel selected by the imperialist power. It is fairly clear that none of the other countries represented will be in a position to supply the technical and material assistance required for developing war production in India. The only solution is for America to supply the machinery and the capital, and, in fact, a start has already been made in this direction. The Government of India has announced that it is "actively interested in a scheme for establishing an aircraft factory in India with American assistance" (*Great Britain and the East*, January 2nd, 1941). At the same time it is reported that the assembly of automobile parts and later perhaps their manufacture may be started by an American firm in India. Having thus acquired a foothold, the American capitalists will endeavour to widen the breach, confident in the knowledge that for the time being only they can deliver the goods.

This poaching by Dollar Imperialism within its rival's preserves sharply accentuates the contradictions that are inherent in the policy, born of dire necessity, of building up war industries in India. It would be a mistake to speak of the "industrialisation of India" as is being glibly done by the imperialists; what is happening is no more than the limited development of war industries—a very different thing from the planned industrialisation of a country on the basis of its natural resources and for the satisfaction of its social needs. Moreover, according to *Great Britain and the East*, we learn that the Government has discovered "certain peculiar difficulties connected with the release of the dollar exchange and the availability of machinery". Further . . . "The Government would only feel justified in giving support to

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the scheme [for automobile manufacture, M.C.] if it could be shown that its operation would constitute a direct and immediate measure of assistance to India's war effort. After careful examination of the position the Government has been forced to the conclusion that this will not be the case." (January 2nd.)

If industries cannot be built up in a day, equally an army of skilled workers cannot come into being to-morrow. The arrival of 50 Indian workers in England (to be followed by a few hundred more) and the despatch of the same number of English workers to India as highly paid instructors, are trifling futilities.

Officially the war is supposed to be bringing India unbounded prosperity owing to the golden opportunities for rapid industrialisation. In actual fact, India, like other colonies, is experiencing a serious and developing economic crisis which Britain's war policy only serves to accentuate. The effect of reducing the silver content of the rupee from eleven-twelfths to six-twelfths will have a disastrous effect on already unstable internal prices. And, whilst the jute industry manages to flourish on an apparently inexhaustible demand for sandbags, jute itself is being so enormously overproduced that the cultivator is getting the record low price of Rs. 2*s.* per *maund* and the Bengal Government has taken the drastic step of reducing the acreage under cultivation by one-third in 1941.

So much for the technical and economic difficulties. There remains the fact that the country which Imperialism proposes to mobilise for its war effort is solidly opposed to the war. Wherever and in whatever way the people are organised they have almost unanimously adopted a hostile attitude towards the Government's policy. The Congress, whom even the Imperialists in their saner moments admit to be the most powerful political organisation in India, and which has a paying membership of several million, demands complete independence from Britain and the calling of a Constituent Assembly to frame a democratic constitution. These demands are supported by the Peasant Movement; by the Student Federation; by the Red Shirts (Frontier Moslems); by the Moslem Ahrars; by the Moslem College of Divines; by the Azad Moslem Conference; by the Indian Christian community which has declared that "the moral contradictions of imperialism have landed Britain in the present crisis. She has sought to justify her own imperialist enslavement of India in sonorous phrases and has sought to stand as the Palladium of Liberty in Europe". And finally, the all-India T.U.C. has unitedly proclaimed that "participation in a war which will not result in the establishment of freedom and democracy in India, will not benefit India, much less will it benefit the working class of India".

In face of the strength of the popular movement and its support for the national demand for independence, the Imperialists realise the enormous difficulties that lie in the way of carrying out their plans. A Special Correspondent in the *Calcutta Statesman* has no illusions. He writes:

> Britain can get a certain amount of raw material, and a certain amount of recruits from India, while the big political parties remain non-co-operating. But defence to-day cannot be based upon that sort of indifferent support.

The stress and the intensity of the present situation in India are reflected in the fact that Imperialism has completely failed to find any basis for an agreed compromise with any considerable section of the Indian bourgeosie

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despite the fact that the Right Wing within the Congress was certainly ready for it. In spite of high hopes no basis for co-operation was found with the result that negotiations broke down and the Congress leadership had to embark upon some form of campaign. Gandhi quite frankly stated that any other line of action would have meant the "break-up of the Congress". In these words he admitted the strength of the popular mass pressure that is driving forward the Congress leadership from below.

The complete breakdown of the negotiations with the Viceroy compelled the latter to widen the scope of arrests to leading Congressmen—including those with whom it had been hoped to reach a compromise. Gandhi opened his campaign of "individual civil disobedience" and drew up a list of "victims". And in the past two months Nehru, along with a number of other well-known leaders, including the President of the Congress, have been arrested and either imprisoned or interned.

But the policy of repression and arrests has to be accompanied by "constructive" proposals for India's future as a background to Mr. Amery's slogan of "India First". What new proposals has Mr. Amery to make? At two of his customary midday feasts, one a "Foyle Luncheon" and the other at the English Speaking Union, Mr. Amery unfolded a remarkable and reactionary plan.

In the first place, he suggests that it is necessary, if the deadlock is to be resolved, for India to find *new leaders;* the old men, representing the Congress and other parties, are too hardened in sin. Mr. Amery did not suggest, as perhaps will done by Indians, that the British people also should get rid of the "old gang" before any fruitful talks can take place; nor did he suggest that the people in the Indian States might well like to get rid of their Maharajahs!

Whilst Mr. Amery is making these comic suggestions, the desired "new leaders" appear on the scene as if by a miracle. But they are disappointing. Mr. Jayakar and Sir T. B. Sapru, those old war-horses of appeasement to Imperialism, come forward with a "let's-all-get-together-in-a-united-effort" plan. But Sapru tried it before in 1929, and failed.

Another rabbit out of the hat of Imperialism is M. N. Roy, described as the "great anti-fascist", the "friend and coadjutor of Lenin", the much boosted "member of the Committee of the Third International". But this practised renegade, slung out of the Communist International in 1929 and slung out of the Congress in 1940, is a poor tool in the hands of Imperialism, hardly deserving of the decorations which, no doubt, will be his for the asking.

Having "solved" the question of leadership, "India First" Amery expounds his new line of thought for India's constitutional future; it is remarkable in its similarity to the fascist corporate state. Instead of the usual democratic forms ("unsuited to Indian conditions") functional representation is proposed, together, perhaps, with an Executive authority independent of the Legislature for the period of its office.

Functional representation is not unknown in India at present. The Lower House of the Federal Government, as planned in 1935, consists of 375 seats, only 86 of which are open to general election. Of the remainder a proportion are reserved to special communities, whilst about 162 are reserved for special classes or "functions". Similarly, in Bengal the Assembly has four seats reserved for hundreds of thousands of workers, five for a few score of land-

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lords, whilst the European commercial interests can muster 26 seats. Applied as a general principle, it is clear that functional representation would permanently provide the vested interests with a parliamentary majority. Mr. Amery calls this a new form of democracy! Perhaps the Labour Party calls it Democratic Imperialism. But Mussolini thought of it first.

But there is no easy possibility of a settlement between Imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie. Imperialism has made overtures to this class in the past and will continue to make them in the future in the hope of winning them away from the struggle for freedom and playing upon their special "vacillating compromising tendency". But the position of deadlock reached to-day, resulting in a veritable régime of tsarist repression, has in great part been the effect of the mass movement in forcing the Congress to break off negotiations. Gandhi himself, and those whom he represents, does not like any form of mass struggle, but nevertheless he has been forced to sanction some limited form of campaign. All attempts to find some alternative to struggle only have the effect of sharpening the conflict and giving added momentum to the very forces which Gandhi desires to hold in check. Thus, as the mass movement develops it gives rise to problems of growing sharpness, and the militant workers and peasants, by their mass pressure and agitation, are able to influence the direction of the movement as a whole. For behind and beneath the present "controlled" campaign of civil disobedience is the fact that the big industrial areas and the whole countryside are already at grips with the bureaucratic machinery of Imperialism.

Ten years ago, at the Lahore meeting of the Congress, it was the rising militancy of the workers and peasants in strikes, demonstrations and pitched battles, which decided the outcome of that historic meeting and forced the wavering leadership to fall in line with the temper of the masses. And it was the Bombay workers who, on October 2nd, 1939, gave a lead to the whole of India by their declaration of a one-day general strike against the war; it was the villagers in the Malabar district who faced police rifles to demonstrate against the use of the Defence of India Act to suppress their democratic rights; it is the peasants in innumerable villages who are boycotting the war fund collections and organising hunger marches; and it is the workers again, throughout industry, who are pressing forward relentlessly with the demand for "No compromise with Imperialism".

The strike figures for 1939 and 1940 show with what courage the organised working class is fighting back against the lowering of the standard of living and against the whole war policy of Imperialism. Although 1939 shows a record number of strikes, nevertheless in the first three months of 1940, in spite of the most violent police repression and the arrest of all leaders, there were 128 strikes, involving 273,990 workers, and the loss of over 4 million days—*the approximate equivalent of the total number of days lost in the whole of* 1939.

The leadership and direction of this great mass movement rests primarily with the illegal and persecuted Communist Party. Increasing numbers of Congress members are turning towards the workers' and peasants' organisations and espousing their cause both within the Congress and in their class battles. And at the same time the influence of the Communist Party grows. Within the Congress they support unhesitatingly the "National Demands" and through the consistency and energy of their work (according to alarmed

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police reports) they have come to occupy numerous positions of trust and responsibility in the Congress organisation.

But at the same time the Communists criticise all signs of vacillation and compromise in the Congress leadership, condemning the refusal of the Congress to support the Anti-war Strike and opposing the appointment of Gandhi as director of Congress policy without any programme of action being mandated to him. At the recent Bombay meeting of the Congress the "Left" vigorously demanded, and won considerable support for, a policy of greater trust in the masses.

Testimony of the strength and the courage with which the revolutionary working class leadership is placing itself in the forefront of the anti-imperialist struggle is contained in the records of the Government itself. The Police Report for Calcutta contains an analysis of Communist literature and publications seized which shows that the circulation of such literature is twice as widespread as in the previous year.

Similarly the Police Report for the rural areas of Bengal states:—

> The revolutionary parties have been engaged in stirring up agrarian unrest throughout the Province. . . . Information in the possession of Government shows beyond a shadow of doubt that during the year all the revolutionary parties were being organised under the cloak of the Congress. . . . There has been a marked increase of Communist activity among the peasantry.

In the light of the great mass movements that are stirring in India, Mr. Amery's constitutional proposals for a government by functional representation reveal their futility even if they are backed up with the might of British bayonets. It begins to look a little foolish, too, for the Labour Party experts to be so free with their promises of everything or anything except what India demands—namely complete independence from British domination. The real voice of the British people is heard in the message which goes out to the Indian people from the People's Convention. Indian nationalists and the workers and peasants who are fighting in the front ranks of the struggle for independence, will receive tremendous encouragement from the knowledge that the people of Britain too are on the move. And we in this country, as the world crisis develops and the rival Great Powers are locked in their death-grip, will begin to see that the Indian masses are coming into the forefront of the great class struggle out of which a new social order will arise and the domination of one nation by another will be ended.

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Civil Liberty in the Empire

BY DESMOND BUCKLE

THE National Council for Civil Liberties is holding a Delegate Conference on Civil Liberty in the Colonial Empire on 15th and 16th February, at which four main aspects of civil liberty will be examined in relation to seven colonies or groups of colonies. These four aspects of the subject are as follows: (1) The Liberty of the Subject; (2) Civil Liberty and Labour; (3) Freedom of Expression; (4) Civil Liberty in War-time.

It might be argued that the present time is not a suitable one for the discussion of civil liberties and democratic rights in the Colonies, when civil liberty is denied in England itself. In the announcement of the Conference, the National Council for Civil Liberties gives the answer:

> The British Government has proclaimed that among its objects in the present war are the protection of democracy and the establishment of liberty. The Peoples of the British Empire, irrespective of race or creed, are called upon to make sacrifices in the war. It is essential, therefore, that liberty and democracy on the widest scale possible should be given to the inhabitants of the British Colonies. . . . If we have learnt nothing else from the last war, at least we must have learned that there can be no lasting peace so long as one people is left in the position of subjection to another.

Further, liberty is indivisible. The encroachment upon the liberties of the people of this country goes hand in hand with, and is an essential part of, the attack upon liberties that is being carried on throughout the world by the ruling classes at war. The destruction of civil liberties in Germany in 1933 was a step in the direction of the loss of those same liberties in this country; the destruction of civil liberties in France by the Daladier-Blum Government brought the peril nearer to us. But throughout this period, and for long years before, the basis and the vitality of our own liberties have been undermined by the denial of democracy and civil rights to the millions of colonial people of the British Empire.

It is necessary that the British people should know what is happening in "their" Empire, for ignorance can neither absolve them from their share of responsibility nor will it be any consolation if the day arrives when they find themselves subject to the same humiliations and restrictions as an African suffers in the land of his birth.

We have been treated recently to a spate of Empire propaganda emanating from the Ministry of Information: "The Empire Crusade", "Our Allies and Proud of It", "A Commonwealth in Arms", "Democratic Imperialism", and so on. This expensive advertisement aims at proving that justice and freedom reside within the realms of the King Emperor. The Labour Party has not protested, but on the contrary carries on the same propaganda. We are bound to infer that the basic war aim of the Government is the preservation and extension of the existing imperial system. But to the people of this country

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and to the colonial people it is a matter of the utmost importance that a new Versailles should not be imposed upon the world together with a redivision of the colonial areas. They cannot agree that the New World Order should be based upon an extension of the British Empire system—even if it calls itself a Commonwealth of Nations.

A detailed survey of civil liberties in each of the subject countries is out of the question here. The Conference now to be held will be able to make such a survey upon the basis of the reports which it is receiving from representative organisations in the countries concerned. In this article I propose to give only a few instances which exemplify the limitations of democracy and civil liberty in the Colonial Empire.

The Union of South Africa boasts of being a Dominion of the British Commonwealth; Southern Rhodesia is virtually also a Dominion, boasting of being a "self-governing" Colony; Kenya (or rather the white settlers of Kenya) are energetic applicants for the privilege of Dominion Status. But in not one of these countries does the black man qualify for the vote or have any say in the management of his country's affairs. The freedom which Dominion Status confers is enjoyed only by the small minority of white settlers, planters and other vested interests.

The composition of the Legislative Council in Kenya will make this clear:

	Population	*Percentage with vote*	*Nominated*	*Elected*
Europeans	19,211	33·2	23	17
Asiatics	46,026	25·9	nil	nil
Arabs	12,166	2·7	nil	nil
Africans	3,253,689	nil	nil	nil
TOTAL	3,331,092	0·6	23	17

In Gambia the Legislative Council boasts of 6 nominated members and 4 officials.

In Tanganyika, a mandated territory and therefore an area in respect of which Britain has special obligations to instruct the natives in the art of self-government, the Council consists of the Governor and 13 officials along with not more than 10 unofficial members. There are no Africans amongst the non-officials, the reason officially given being that Africans cannot speak English!

In the West Indies the situation is as follows: The total population is 2,004,543; percentage with vote is 4.8 per cent; nominated members in the Councils are 86 in number as compared with 57 elected on a very restricted property franchise.

In Ceylon, which enjoys the most liberal constitution in the Empire, there is a reactionary move for constitutional revision, and the Governor has on several occasions used his powers to override his Ministers.

In every Colony, the Governor has the right, even where it is not the normal procedure, to rule by Ordinance and executive decree. The Legislative bodies, where they exist at all, are façades behind which bureaucracy rules. If, as in Cyprus in 1930, they start to obstruct the policy of imperialism, they are superseded.

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An elementary right of a citizen of any state is that of complete freedom of movement and equality with his fellow-citizens, subject only to compliance with the necessary rules and laws of society. This right is denied to a great section of the peoples within the Empire, particularly in East Africa where "Pass Laws" and "Segregation" are in operation. These laws, as their names imply, prohibit the movement of individuals (Africans, of course) outside certain reserved and specified areas, and enforce the carrying of one or more "passes" by those to whom the laws apply.

In some places half a dozen or more "passes" have to be carried before an African can safely venture to move about. Judge Krause, a South African judge, recently stated that "the African is a prisoner in his own land". He had no hesitation in saying that 90 per cent of the prison population was due to the Pass and Tax laws. With the increase of these laws and regulations, he said, "a raw native will be lucky if within twenty-four hours of entering an urban area he does not find himself in prison."

This system of Pass Laws (as indeed the whole principle of herding Africans into "reserves" and then by means of poll taxes forcing them to leave the land in search of labour in the mines or plantations) is dictated by the requirements of the white settlers. The African is by tradition an agriculturist; the wages offered to him in the mines and plantations are not much of an incentive to change his mode of life willingly; but the white settlers need an adequate and cheap labour force. The Pass Laws, operated in conjunction with the *Masters and Servants Act*, are directed towards the organisation and regulation of this labour supply.

Concerning the subject of Forced Labour a great deal has been said and written. The League of Nations laid upon all its member States the obligation of abolishing forced labour in the territories under their control. But forced labour is still a recognised and legal institution in East Africa. In Kenya, in 1937, there were 53 camps for the detention of 19,000 Africans (mainly tax-defaulters) who were employed on compulsory labour schemes. In addition, under the Compulsory Labour Ordinance, 3,414 days were put in by workers called up by the Government. In Tanganyika (1936) the Government requisitioned 15,750 working days.

> It would be difficult (says Lord Hailey), and it would be unsafe, to generalise as to the extent to which the restrictions placed by legislation upon the use of forced labour for public purposes are observed in practice.

Where, as in Africa, Trade Unionism is illegal and strikes are expressly penalised under the law, it is inevitable that trouble should occur in cases where the workers are driven to back up their demands by withholding their labour. Recently in the Rhodesian copper mines 17 workers lost their lives and 70 were injured when armed police were called in to deal with a strike situation.

But, whilst action in the shape of organisation of the workers for strikes is regarded by imperialism as a seditious and dangerous activity, equally the free expression of opinions is a danger that the ruling class cannot countenance. Each Colony has its own Sedition Ordinance or Defence Regulations or similar apparatus for the effective control of the spoken and written word.

A few years ago a native of Nyasaland was sentenced to three years' hard

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labour for bringing into the colony a copy of the *Workers' Herald*, a paper freely circulating in South Africa.

In the majority of African dependencies it is a punishable offence within the meaning of the Sedition Acts to make the remark that employers pay low wages.

The war has been used as an excuse to put even more serious obstacles in the way of popular political and economic organisations and to limit the narrow field within which a man may safely say what he feels. Since the war broke out many working class or progressive newspapers, where such existed, have been banned, for instance: *The African Standard*, the Jamaican *Standard*, the *Worker and Peasant*, *Young Ceylon*, and others.

Not only trade union meetings but even the customary meetings of organisations like the Negro Welfare Cultural and Social Association have been forbidden in Trinidad. It is interesting to note that in this particular case the Commissioner of Police in conversation with one of the organisers, Mr. O'Connor, is reported in *New Dawn* to have said that among the "undesirable features of a previous meeting was a quotation of passages from *Your Liberty in Danger* issued by the National Council for Civil Liberties !

Bustamente (Jamaica), Butler (Trinidad), Wallace Johnson (Sierra Leone), working class leaders in Ceylon and Cyprus, along with many others whose names are not reported, have been arrested and interned or deported since the war broke out for the parts they have played in the organisation of the workers to struggle for their demands.

Behind the optimism of official propaganda about Democratic Imperialism can be heard an undertone of disquiet at the currents of feeling developing among the colonial peoples. Through the blanket of the censorship now and again is heard the voice of the workers in the Colonies, more openly expressed in the "advanced" colonies of Cyprus, Ceylon, Palestine, Malaya and the West Indies, demanding freedom from exploitation by *any* imperialist power. But even where that voice cannot at the moment be heard because of the heavy penalties imposed on "sedition", nevertheless the demand for democratic rights and civil liberties rises to make a mockery of official propaganda about the Empire.

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The Blockade of Britain

BY PETER FIELD

The Collapse of Exports

BEFORE THE WAR the Government published very detailed statistics of exports and imports. It gave the quantities and values of our exports by individual commodities and countries. Today we neither know to which countries our exports are going nor do we know how much we export. True, monthly, some meagre data on the value of exports are given. But in a period of rapid price changes, figures on the value of exports are rather valueless.

Fortunately, with a little statistical work, it is possible to get a rough picture of the changes in the volume of exports. In the following table we give the official figures of the value of exports (recomputed into index form), of wholesale prices*, and of the volume, that is, of the quantity of exports:

EXPORTS, JUNE 1939, TO NOVEMBER 1940
(JUNE/AUGUST 1939 EQUALS 100)

Year and Month	*Exports (Value)*	*Prices*	*Exports (Quantities)*
June 1939	102	100	102
July	103	100	103
August	95	100	95
September	59	104	57
October	63	108	59
November	96	115	83
December	103	117	88
January 1940	105	119	88
February	96	121	79
March	106	123	87
April	124	125	99
May	117	127	92
June	93	126	74
July	80	130	62
August	83	130	64
September	80	130	61
October	60	130	46
November	56	134	41

After the first disturbances through the war had been overcome, the volume of exports increased again and reached in April, 1940, about the pre-war level. Many of these exports were destined for France. Yet France had at once or later to pay for them, either in cash or in commodities, and the British ruling class could be said to profit very considerably from this increase in exports. After the fall of France exports declined rapidly to about 60 per cent

* The index of wholesale prices of export commodities was constructed as follows: the indices of wholesale prices of (1) food and tobacco, of (2) basic materials, and of (3) manufactured articles were combined into one index by weighting them according to the value of exports of (1) food, drink and tobacco, of (2) raw materials and articles mainly unmanufactured, and of (3) articles wholly or mainly manufactured. The method is a rather rough one but the best possible one under the circumstances of the statistical black-out arranged by the Government.

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of the pre-war level and remained stable at this level in July, August and September.

In October a new break occurred and exports fell rapidly until in November they reached a level 60 per cent below that of the last three peace months. These figures do not include the losses through sea warfare and actually even fewer commodities reach the world market than the above figures indicate.

Exports today are probably lower than they have ever been during the present century, if we assume the figures for October and November to be indicative for the whole year to come. *With a decline by about* 60 *per cent one can say: exports have collapsed.*

The Effects of the German Blockade upon Imports

The decline in exports is partly due to the German blockade and partly to the inability of the British ruling class to produce for export and for the war at the same time. The decline of imports is due almost solely to the blockade. Imports have developed as follows:†

IMPORTS, JUNE 1939 TO NOVEMBER 1940
(JUNE/AUGUST 1939, EQUAL 100)

Year and Month	*Imports (Value)*	*Prices*	*Imports (Quantities)*
June 1939	102	100	102
July	98	100	98
August	100	100	100
September	62	109	57
October	78	116	68
November	106	125	85
December	110	130	85
January 1940	133	135	98
February	122	137	89
March	138	137	101
April	138	142	97
May	134	143	94
June	116	144	81
July	112	148	76
August	123	148	83
September	104	148	70
October	110	150	74
November	95	153	62

† The index of import prices is computed as follows: the index of (1) food and tobacco prices, the index of prices of (2) basic materials and an index of (3) the average of prices of intermediate products and manufactured articles were combined into one index by weighting them according to the value of (1) exports of food, drink and tobacco, of (2) raw materials and articles mainly unmanufactured, and of (3) articles wholly or mainly manufactured. Again a very rough method, but the best possible under the prevailing circumstances. It is of interest to compare the index of export prices and the index of import prices. The latter has risen considerably more because food and raw materials play a much larger rôle in imports than in exports and their prices have risen considerably more than those of manufactured articles. In this way the development of prices influences foreign trade even more unfavourably than the quantity figures indicate. The ruling class is in a doubly unfavourable position because, firstly it has difficulty to produce export articles and the blockade means large losses of imports, and secondly the balance of trade becomes more and more unfavourable because of the different price development for export and import goods. In November imports amounted to £72 millions and exports only to £22 millions, the unfavourable balance being almost two and a half times greater than exports. *Exports play a smaller and smaller rôle as a factor paying for imports.*

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The German blockade has had very marked effects. At a time when the ruling class would like to import considerably more than they did in peacetime, imports are cut down by about 40 per cent. If this state of affairs continues very much longer—and only Wall Street can bring about a quick change by sending or lending American ships of the merchant marine and of the navy (for protection of convoys)—then the difficulties which are experienced today will grow very much greater.

Regarded from the point of view of the ruling class the situation as far as imports are concerned must be characterised as disastrous.

The Double Blockade

We are all suffering from the German blockade just as the German people are suffering from the blockade which our ruling class (with a labour minister in the responsible Government office) imposes on them.

But we are suffering in addition by a blockade which our own ruling class exercises against us. This form of blockade consists in the ruthless cutting down of imports of foodstuffs in favour of armament materials. This becomes very obvious from the following table, indicating the development of all imports and of food imports:

IMPORTS OF ALL COMMODITIES AND IMPORTS OF FOOD
(JUNE/AUGUST 1939 EQUAL 100)

Month and Year	*Total Imports Quantities*	*Food Imports Quantities*
June 1939	102	104
July 1939	98	95
August 1939	100	101
September 1940	70	56
October 1940	74	61
November 1940	62	50

Relative imports of all commodities are more than 20 per cent higher than imports of food alone.

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The English Revolution

A number of contributions have been received on this question, arising from the review of Christopher Hill's "The English Revolution" by P.F. in the October LABOUR MONTHLY, *and the subsequent discussion contained in the criticism of the review by Douglas Garman, together with the reply of P.F. in the December issue. We print below two further contributions from Dona Torr and Maurice Dobb. The* LABOUR MONTHLY *wishes to make it clear that the material published on this question in its pages, including the original review and the articles printed below, have been published for purposes of discussion, and should not be taken as expressions of the viewpoint of the* LABOUR MONTHLY. *While the severe limitations of space under present conditions prevent a prolongation of the controversy, careful consideration is being given to all the many viewpoints sent in, and the* LABOUR MONTHLY *will publish in a future number a statement on the issues involved in the controversy.*]

I

By Dona Torr

I agree with the criticisms of P.F.'s review made by Douglas Garman; I also think that P.F.'s interpretation is non-Marxist, whilst Hill's method, whether one agrees with every particular estimate or not, is Marxist. Out of many points only a few can be noted here.

For Hill, 1640–60 "saw the destruction of a whole social order—feudalism—and the introduction of a political structure within which capitalism could freely develop". For P.F., the bourgeoisie had come to power a century earlier under the Tudors (which monarch unspecified), sixteenth-century society as a whole had a "capitalist bourgeois character"; but there still existed some "feudal strongholds" and in the seventeenth century under Charles I, "there was a counter-revolutionary (or 'reactionary') movement. . . . The Civil War of 1642 began as a necessary suppression . . . in order *to keep the bourgeoisie in power*." "Mr. Hill exaggerates the importance of the feudal remnants." "*Feudal power was finally broken by absolutism*" (under the Tudors).

The first question to be raised is the understanding of the stages of capitalist development. P.F.'s most serious mistake here is his assumption, specifically refuted by Marx and Lenin, that self-sufficient manorial economy passes straight into capitalist economy; that unless serfs tied to the soil are paying labour rent, "feudal methods of agriculture" (P.F.) are at an end. Ignoring the intermediate stages of small commodity production, essential to capitalist development, he omits from his survey of sixteenth century English society the largest section, the peasantry, and uses the categories of a later stage, assuming that the existence of a considerable number of proletarians implies the establishment of capitalist society.

Between the stage of manorial economy, with serf labour, and the final form of capitalist society when the decisive body of producers are "free" proletarians selling their labour power, capitalism, developing in the womb of feudalism, slowly defeats small subsistence economy; English manorial economy was breaking down in the fourteenth century but it was only with the "industrial revolution" 400 years later that the decisive body of producers became proletarian.

P.F. says sixteenth-century agriculture "had become essentially capitalist". Essentially capitalist agriculture means large-scale farming by industrial capitalists paying ground rent and employing wage labourers —this form existed in the sixteenth century but not as the dominant *mode of production*, for the development of money capital and of merchant capitalism does not necessarily alter the mode of production or social structure. But in the long phases between the commutation of labour-rent into money-rent and its transformation into economic-rent, money capital intensifies feudal exploitation whilst producing that differentiation among the peasantry which raised up English yeomanry and Russian kulaks. Hill consequently shows the importance (for capitalism) of the abolition of feudal tenures and manorial courts by the revolution and the reasons for the part played in it by the plebeian elements, later defeated, of whom only a minority were proletarian.

P.F. also confuses the stage of manufacture (depending on handicraftsmen and on domestic industry, especially that of impoverished peasants) with the stage of factory production; he speaks of the "manufacturing proletariat", thus ignoring the great future "leap" of the industrial

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revolution. The test for the advance of commodity production towards capitalist society is not the existence of a proletariat (a proletariat existed in ancient Rome), but the extent to which the division of labour and the development of the home market have proceeded. Hill recognises this test, P.F. ignores it.

But P.F.'s chief mistake is his mechanical conception that if capitalism has established itself as a dominant force then "bourgeois society" must be automatically established as well. He thus contradicts the fundamental law of social change:

> "The material forces of production in society come into conflict with the existing relations of production—or, what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces these relations turn into its fetters. Then comes the period of social revolution."
>
> (Introduction, *Critique of Political Economy*.)

Engels, referring to the great *economic* revolution of the sixteenth century which, according to P.F., established bourgeois society and bourgeois State power, says:

> "But this mighty revolution in the economic conditions of society was not followed by any corresponding change in its political structure. The State order remained feudal while society became more and more bourgeois."
>
> (*Anti-Duhring*, p. 120 and *c.f.* p. 208).

Hill's argument is true to this dialectical distinction. New productive forces develop first in the form of relatively unorganised quantitative economic changes which can advance, not without class struggles and social changes, but without the aid of highly co-ordinated class action. Then comes first, intensified political struggle against classes identified with the old *social structure* and finally the decisive qualitative change of the *social system* which can only be brought about by the highest organised forms of co-ordinated class action demanding the supreme expression of unified will, action and leadership, *e.g.*, Cromwell and the "New Model" army.

P.F. does not clear himself from Garman's charge of reformism by citing a list of events which involved forcible acts. The hallmark of reformism is its attitude, not to force as such, but to the class struggle—its refusal to recognise the way in which class struggle is the motive power of advance. Revolution is the transference of power from one class to another: "Lenin thought the most important question of every revolution was the question of State power" (Stalin). State power, the strongest of the "fetters", is the last to be broken because it concentrates within itself all the old "legal relations" and by its very nature is an organ of force. Marx specifically identified "force the midwife" with State power.

But on the question of State power, P.F. is utterly confused. In October he has the Tudor State power already tied to the "bourgeois capitalist class"—"the demands of the capitalists are executed and encouraged by the monarchs, who also are capitalists;" in December he slightly alters his formula, for his picture of Tudor monarchs executing the demands of the capitalists identified him with the mistake of Pokrovsky.

He calls Queen Elizabeth "the most prominent capitalist in capitalist bourgeois society—comparable to Leopold I of Belgium", in the nineteenth century, ignoring the fact that the Tudor and Stuart Crown trade monopolies were not personal investments but an integral part of feudal-absolutist State power, for, until the revolution, the monarch's prime revenue, with which he was supposed to finance the State machine, was still the revenue derived from the feudal Crown estates (increased by Henry VIII's plunder from the monasteries) and Crown trade monopolies. Besides freedom of commerce, the central questions of the revolution, Hill tells us, were control of the army and finance. (He also explains why the Tudors could afford concessions impossible for the Stuarts.) By the revolution Parliament gained control of the army and finance. Yet this *change in the character of the State power*—from absolutism to republic, and finally to constitutional monarchy—is never mentioned by P.F.

As to the specific references of Marx and Engels to the revolution, not one supports P.F.'s ideas; Marx and Engels took the same view as Hill: they ranked the revolution with the German Reformation and the French revolution as one of the three great decisive battles in the long struggle of the bourgeoisie against feudalism. P.F. refuses to allow "the Great Rebellion" as he prefers to call it (adopting the name by which, Engels noted, it is "known to respectability") to rank, as Marx and Engels ranked it, with the great French revolution; it was "not the war of liberation of a suppressed bourgeoisie against feudalism." Here again P.F. misses the essential fea-

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ture of bourgeoisie revolution, viz., that it only arrives *after* capitalism is far developed. How does he explain the fact that France in the eighteenth century, before the revolution, was a greater commercial power and had more developed industries (manufacture) than eighteenth-century England?

From the compromise of 1688 Marx and Engels developed all their interpretation of later English society. P.F., who has destroyed feudalism in England by the sixteenth century, deprives himself of their essential clue: they thought that in Britain, France and Germany the bourgeoisie never completed their victory or ruled alone.

II

By Maurice Dobb

The review by P.F. of Christopher Hill's *English Revolution* in your October issue strikes me as unsatisfactory, even though the central point that he makes in the review is, I think, both important and substantially correct.

It is unsatisfactory, to my mind, for two reasons. First, it pays no tribute to the undoubtedly valuable quality of the book as the first attempt we have had to estimate the "progressive" significance of the seventeenth-century revolution and to assess it as the crucial phase of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in England. Secondly, because, after rejecting the view that this was a revolution against feudalism, the reviewer offers us no positive hint as to what the true interpretation is. Consequently the review leaves us with a purely negative (if important) contribution. Its principal weakness seems to me to lie in its neglect to tell us anything about a crucial matter (a neglect which strikes me as also the real weakness of Christopher Hill's otherwise admirable essay): the changes that had taken place, and were in process, in the *mode of production*.

If one dates the rise of capitalism as a mode of production from the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century (as is sometimes done), then Marxists are confronted with this problem. How could the seventeenth-century struggle be treated as a bourgeois-democratic revolution when it came a century and a half before the rise of capitalist production? Whence a bourgeoisie to carry through the revolution, if the capitalist mode of production was not yet in being at all? Moreover, what *was* the prevailing mode of production in Stuart England anyhow? P.F. is quite right in saying it was not feudal. But to reply that Tudor and Stuart England was an epoch of "merchant capitalism" by contrast with later "industrial capitalism" is to evade the issue. For, as Marx points out, merchant capital at first develops "independently and outside" the mode of production. Even when merchant capital begins to penetrate production and subordinate the latter to itself, it does so at first merely in order to exploit the pre-existing mode of production more effectively—"it merely deteriorates the condition of the direct producers . . . and absorbs their surplus-labour on the basis of the old mode of production." Only at a later stage does the penetration of merchant capital into production begin to change the mode of production. And even at this stage "the really revolutionary way" of transition is the rise from among the producers themselves of a capitalist element that begins to engage in trade, while large sections of "pure" merchant capital became a reactionary force and "an obstacle to a real capitalist mode of production".

I am far from being the expert that Hill is, and that P.F. may be, on the history of this period. But from my slender knowledge of it I would suggest that the correct answer probably lies somewhere along the following lines. Whereas at the end of the fifteenth century merchant capital had wrested a major share of political power from the decayed feudal baronage and had disintegrated most of the old feudal relationships, the mode of production (urban handicraft and the open-field peasant village) retained for the time being most of its continuity with that of the feudal epoch. At the same time its subordination to feudal overlordship was in the main broken: in other words, the *independent* handicraftsman and semi-independent peasant emerged; and the *relations* of production, hence, were changed even if the *productive forces* retained their medieval shape. But in the sixteenth century this mode of production was *already in process of transformation* into a capitalist one, if only into what Marx termed the first phase of capitalist production—"manufacture" and the capitalist domestic system. This transformation was taking three main forms. In agriculture there was a considerable development of medium-sized "kulak" farming, outside the old manorial economy, as well as a certain amount of large-scale capitalist farming (mainly pasture) by the smaller gentry and squires. In textiles, leather, small metal trades, etc., the craftsman was being in-

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creasingly subordinated to the control of capital in the person of the capitalist "merchant manufacturer", who gave out work on what often amounted to a piece-rate basis and evaded the guild restrictions by developing industry outside the town boundaries. In a number of newer industries, where significant changes in technique had already occurred, there began to appear the fully-fledged industrial capitalist, hiring wage-labour on a factory basis. (even if these were at this time no more than "islands" in the economy): for example, in mining, smelting, paper, power-making, alum, brass and ordnance.

The claims of these (still various and non-homogeneous) elements of a class of industrial capitalists for a share in political power were strenuously resisted by the merchant capital of the earlier period; since the latter had by now become mainly export-monopolists and financiers, and by investing in land had stepped into the shoes of the feudal baronage and the monasteries, and entered into alliance with such feudal remnants as survived (*e.g.* the influence of the Court) to preserve the restrictive privileges of this limited circle. But these privileges (*e.g.* foreign trade monopolies, Court-monopoly of industrial patents and licences) hampered the development of the new mode of production. Whence the seventeenth-century revolution.

M. H. D.

DOCUMENT OF THE MONTH

Resolutions of the People's Convention, January 12th, 1941

1. Policy and Programme

WE, the 2,234 delegates of organisations representing 1,200,000 workers assembled in the first meeting of the People's Convention in London, on January 12th, 1941,

DECLARE OUR CONVICTION

that the present Government represents the interests of the rich;

that only the unity and active struggle of the working people in their own interests, and the establishment of a People's Government truly representative of the working people, can save them from the disasters and sufferings which the war is bringing upon them.

WE ACCUSE THE GOVERNMENT AND THE RULING CLASS OF THIS COUNTRY

of bearing a heavy responsbility for this war by their entire policy since 1918, carrying on the war for aims of reactionary class interests and world domination, contrary to the interests of the people, placing all the burdens of the war upon the people, and forcing down their standard of living, while piling up profits for their own class;

destroying democratic and trade union rights;

fostering racial hatred amongst peoples;

opposing the just democratic demands of India and the colonial peoples of the British Empire;

neglecting adequate air-raid protection of the people;

promoting hostility to the Soviet Union;

and generally pursuing policies which are leading the people to catastrophe.

WE PROCLAIM THE RIGHT OF THE COMMON PEOPLE

to a full, free, and happy life, which can only be won if wars are brought to an end by uprooting their causes, and if our labour and skill are devoted to producing the things we need and distributing them among all.

WE THEREFORE RESOLVE to fight for the following:

Programme

1. To raise the living standards of the people, including wages, pensions, compensation, insurance and unemployment allowances, and the restoration and extension of educational facilities.
2. Adequate A.R.P., bomb-proof shelters, and prompt and effective provision for all the needs of air-raid victims, includ-

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ing re-housing and full and immediate compensation.

3. Restoration, safeguarding and extension of all Trade Union rights, and democratic rights and civil liberties.
4. Emergency powers to be used to take over the banks, land, transport, armaments, and other large industries in order to organise our economic life in the interests of the people.
5. National Independence for India, the right of all Colonial peoples to determine their own destiny, and the ending of enforced partition of Ireland.
6. Friendship with the U.S.S.R.
7. A People's Government truly representative of the working people and able to command the confidence of working people throughout the world.
8. A People's Peace, won by the working people of all countries, and based on the right of all peoples to determine their own destiny.

WE CALL on all working men, women and youth, on all professional workers, on all those interested in peace and progress, to unite to fight for this programme in order by their solidarity and action to impose their majority will on the ruling class and secure their own Government.

WE CALL on all Labour, Co-operative and Trade Union organisations, and all mass organisations of the working people, to unite their ranks and combine their endeavours to organise this common fight for the victory of this programme.

WE PLEDGE OURSELVES, the delegates of the People's Convention here assembled, to spread the message of the People's Convention, and to organise and extend the mighty movement of the people for the realisation of this programme.

AND WE APPOINT AND MANDATE our National Committee, the elected representatives of the people, to carry forward the campaign, build up the organisation of the movement, promote mass demonstrations and all other activities in accordance with the programme; recall the People's Convention, and in all ways lead the struggle to the victory of a People's Government and a People's Peace.

LET THE PEOPLE HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THEIR OWN STRENGTH.

THE PEOPLE ALONE CAN SAVE THE PEOPLE.

II. Organisation and Campaign

WE, the delegates elected by the people, assembled at this first meeting of the People's Convention held in London on January 12th, 1941, solemnly resolve to carry forward to achievement the Policy and Programme framed and endorsed by us at this historic gathering.

We pledge ourselves to support and assist every form of struggle of the working people for better conditions of life, the struggle of the workers in industry for higher wages and better conditions and for shorter hours, the housewives' struggle against the high cost of living, the tenants' struggle against high rents and bad housing conditions, the struggle of youth, women, mothers, small shopkeepers, land workers, office workers, civil servants.

We declare that a People's Government can and will be secured by the united and determined efforts of the working class and progressive people. To this end we pledge ourselves to organise the united mass movement of the people in the struggle for the aims contained in our programme and to win our organisations for full support.

We will work to strengthen and revitalise the trade union movement. To maintain trade union democracy, to end the policy of subordinating the interests of the working class to the interests of the Government and the employers, and to assist every effort of the trade unions for the betterment of working class standards, the express purpose for which they were brought into existence. To strengthen and revitalise the Trades Councils in order that they will be effective co-ordinating bodies in every locality for the Trade Union Movement.

We will work to strengthen the Co-operative Movement as the means of safeguarding the supplies of essential commodities for the people and combating profiteering. At the same time we will work to safeguard the interests of the small shopkeeper, small farmer and consumer.

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We will aim to win the mass of the Labour Party members and Divisional Labour Parties to support the struggle for a People's Government and to end the policy of collaboration between the Labour Party leadership and the ruling class.

We pledge ourselves to achieve the unity of the organised working class and all progressive people in a mighty movement for a People's Government. To seek co-operation with all progressive associations and organisations for this purpose.

To assist in every form, working-class struggle for improvement of wages and conditions and for the advance of education, art, and entertainment.

We recognise that the accomplishment of the historic task lying before us needs the accumulation and responsible use of sufficient cash resources. Though every penny will represent a sacrifice, we have confidence in the willingness of the common people to build and sustain their own Movement. We pledge ourselves to devote unremitting energy to the collection of funds so that the work of the National Committee and its Regional Committees may never be crippled or halted for lack of essential cash. We charge the National Committee with responsibility for supervising the best employment of all funds raised in the name of the People's Convention for the realisation of its programme.

This First Session of the People's Convention decides to elect a National Committee with full responsibility to conduct the campaign. Regional Committees will be elected on the broadest possible basis at Regional People's Conventions under the direction of the National Committee. Regional Committees will have the responsibility to assist to develop the campaign in the localities through whatever form of united organisation and action can be achieved in a given locality.

This First Session of the People's Convention will stand adjourned to be recalled in order to carry forward the campaign for a People's Government.

1940

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Big Growth in Discussion Groups

SINCE last month's report we have had news of approximately twenty newly formed LABOUR MONTHLY DISCUSSION GROUPS. This is a significant and important development. It is now a year since the first of such Groups was established and until recently our monthly list grew very slowly. Readers have, of course, noticed in the last three months its considerable lengthening. Culminating in the big January increase, we have here a process of spontaneous, and therefore healthy, development which vindicates our original view that such Groups will more and more be found to perform an indispensable function in a situation where older facilities for serious political discussion have disappeared, but the desire for such discussion is more intense than at any other period in our generation.

We suggest to every reader that this month's list be carefully scrutinised. See if your district is included and if it is write to us for particulars (2½*d.* stamp, please), so that you may begin to play your part in the essential task of mutual political education through discussion. If your district is not mentioned, we ask: What about it, comrade? Let us send you our Notes on Organisation of Discussion Groups and have your district appearing in next month's list. If you think well of the idea, act *now*. There can be no advantage in delaying.

We have been particularly interested to have a letter from the Shop Stewards Committee of a big engineering plant, where 60 copies of LABOUR MONTHLY are sold every month. They have formed a Discussion Group out of "the lads on the job". This gives all of us a valuable idea and we look forward to hearing of others of a similar kind.

Our monthly *Discussion Notes* are proving very popular. Both Groups and individuals are sending in for them. But we desire to have vastly more applications. Please include an addressed *foolscap* envelope, stamped (2½*d.*). Better still, subscribe for one year's supply by sending us 3*s.* Many readers are finding them an invaluable *introduction* to each month's LABOUR MONTHLY, reading them beforehand as a summary, in effect, of the issues covered by the whole of the contents—and then reading them again to reinforce their understanding of the political arguments developed in our pages.

DISCUSSION GROUPS ORGANISER.

(In the following list new Groups are shown in capital letters)

LONDON

Camden Town
Edgware and Mill Hill
Finchley
Hampstead
Hampstead Garden Suburb
HIGHGATE
St. Pancras
Stamford Hill
Walthamstow

PROVINCES

ABERCYNON (Glam.)
Aberystwyth
Aylesbury
BANSTEAD
Barrow-in-Furness
Bath
Birmingham
Bishop's Stortford
Blackburn
Bournemouth
BOWHILL (Fife)
Bristol
Bromley (Kent)
Cambridge
Carlisle
CARSHALTON*
COATBRIDGE
Colchester
COWDENBEATH
DERBY
DUMFRIES
EAST GRINSTEAD
EDGWARE*
Enfield
Farnham
GLASGOW (Rutherglen)
Gravesend
Greenock
Halifax
Harpenden
Hyde, Cheshire
Kenton* (Middlesex)
LEAMINGTON*
Letchworth
Liverpool
Llandudno
LUTON
MANCHESTER (16)
,, (20) (Wythenshawe)
Manchester
Minehead
MOORPARK (Renfrew)
MORDEN (Surrey)
Nelson
Newcastle-on-Tyne
Oxford
Enfield
Pinner (Middlesex)
Peterborough
Portsmouth
Port Talbot
Preston
Radlett
Reading
Renfrew
Sheffied
SHEPPERTON*
Shrewsbury
Sidcup
Stockton-on-Tees
St. Albans
STOURBRIDGE
Sudbury (Suffolk)
SUNBURY*
UPMINSTER
WALLINGTON*
Waltham Cross (Herts)
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